

Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDEST ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

Winter
(July–September) 1994, no 53
\$6.50*

Surveys:

Touring skis
Skins for skis

Bushwalking:

Peter Dombrovskis
Mt Warning
The Kimberleys

Australian
Patagonian
climbs

Fighting for
forests in
East Gippsland
Rockclimbing
paradise
Paddling behind
the former
Iron Curtain

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WARNING

The activities covered by this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.

Cover John Fantini above the Italian Col on FitzRoy, Patagonia, overlooked by the soaring bulk of Aiguille Poincenot. *Simon Parsons*

*Maximum Australian recommended retail price only

Wild

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

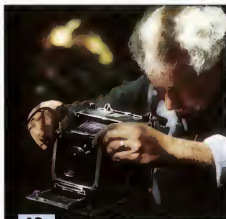
Established 1981



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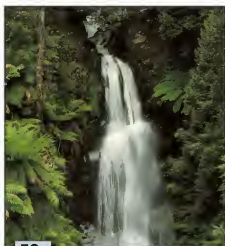
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DOWNHILL ALL THE WAY

The Victorian Government loses its way on Mt Stirling

Most Victorian readers of *Wild* will need little introduction to Mt Stirling: it is the best medium-to-hard ski-touring venue within day-trip distance of Melbourne.

But not, perhaps, for long.

At a public meeting in Mansfield in March, Philip Bentley, Chief Executive Officer of the Alpine Resorts Commission (ARC), read a ministerial statement from the Minister for Natural Resources, Geoff Coleman.

The statement began by referring to 'ecotourism' opportunities at Mt Stirling, but went on to describe an agreement, about to be finalized, to build a downhill ski resort on the mountain, complete with tram-sized gondolas to bring downhill skiers from nearby Mt Buller, roads, lifts and accommodation. It would certainly be the end of Mt Stirling's remote character.

The environmental record of the ARC, the authority responsible for alpine resorts in Victoria, is chilling. The ARC's management has seen raw sewage released into alpine streams, a massive landslide at Mt Hotham in 1988 (when the ARC had ignored warnings not to clear trees) and a 3000 litre oil spill wiping out plant and animal life in a stream at Falls Creek in the same year.

The proposed developer for Mt Stirling is the Grollo-owned Mt Buller Ski Lift Company. The Grollos are controversial Melbourne developers. *Wild* has a copy of the proposed agreement between the ARC and the developer and it is apparent that this agreement would have handed over a monopoly on the mountain to the developers without requiring any up-front fee whatsoever. The government intended simply to give away our mountain heritage.

Opposition to the proposal was immediate and intense. The Mansfield community, which contains many small operators introducing visitors to the remote character of Mt Stirling year round, attacked the plans and brought court proceedings in an attempt to thwart further development.

As a result of those proceedings, the ARC was prevented from entering into the agreement with the Grollos. It was found that the ARC had acted in breach of a number of legislative provisions, and it was forced to pay costs.

Large public gatherings were organized at short notice by the Wilderness Society and the Victorian National Parks Association. Tim Macartney-Snape likened the proposal to building a football field in Melbourne's Royal Botanical Gardens.

The Liberal Party, at its State Conference, condemned its own minister's proposal and called for a complete review of the ARC.

The terms of that review have just been revealed, and it promises to be another whitewash of the discredited ARC. The minister has not involved any of the objectors in drawing up the terms of the review. The

review will report to him, and will not consider the role the ARC should have, but only how it fulfils its present role. Any review needs to assess the obvious conflict of interest inherent in the ARC being both the planning authority for alpine resorts and the body responsible for promoting those resorts.

According to the government there is no proposal for Mt Stirling now, but at the same time it says that the matter will be subject to 'a comprehensive Environmental Effects Statement'. As an environmental effects statement

in our very busy mail-order and advertising departments. He has considerable tramping (sorry, bushwalking) and climbing experience.

Wild things

We've finally completed the *magnum opus* of the index for issues 43-50. With the five earlier indexes this completes the indexing of our first 50 issues—hundreds of thousands of entries to enable you really to use your *Wild* collection as a reference resource. All six indexes are still



Recent additions to the *Wild* staff (left to right): Shane Merx, who joined us in October 1992; Graeme Owers (March 1994); and David Burnett (February 1994). Merx collection, Chris Baxter and Michael Gidding

can be prepared only in relation to a specific proposal, the government's message in this regard is unclear to say the least.

The government may now be back-pedalling, but it has refused to say that the downhill ski resort will not go ahead, and a resort appears to be very much part of the agenda.

Mt Stirling should not go the way of Victoria's other ski resorts: lamentable scars on the landscape all year round. Instead, it should continue to be a place where remote skiing and walking experiences can be enjoyed without the intrusions of yet another major development.

More new faces at *Wild*

As you may have noticed, the two new positions mentioned in the Editorial in *Wild* no 52 were filled just as that issue was going to press. Now it's my pleasure to introduce the successful applicants. David Burnett is our new Assistant Editor (with long-serving staff member Glenn van der Knijff). A former editor of the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club publication *The Mountaineer*, David has a tertiary qualification in journalism as well as writing and publishing experience. Graeme Owers, an enthusiastic 19-year-old Kiwi, came to Melbourne to take up a new trainee position

available for only \$5.95 each—see the order form between pages 20 and 21.

You will have observed that, since issue 49, there has been a bar-code on the cover of *Wild*. Despite what you might think, this has nothing to do with point of sale. Rather, it is to assist Gordon and Gotch, our distributor to thousands of newsagents throughout Australia, to identify copies of *Wild* returned to it among unsold copies of a multitude of other magazines it distributes. Gordon and Gotch has pioneered sophisticated computerized scanning for this process at its new Albury, New South Wales, plant, where unsold copies are counted and then recycled.

We are keen at present to hear from Western Australian readers who would like to contribute material on walking, climbing and canoeing in that State, particularly its delightful and varied south-west. Telephone me personally on (03) 826 8482 with your article/photo ideas. I look forward to discussing them with you.

In accordance with our policy of constantly improving *Wild*, the free guidebook in issue 52 (last issue) was the first printed in full colour throughout. But it's not just a question of improving the quality of *Wild*—the last three issues have each consisted of 120 pages; easily a record for successive issues of *Wild*. Meanwhile, the cover price has remained unchanged, at only \$6.50, for almost four years. ■

Chris Baxter

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Contributions, preferably well illustrated with slides, are welcome. **Guide-lines** for Contributors are available on receipt of a stamped, addressed envelope. Submissions should be either typed, double-spaced on one side of an A4 sheet of paper or, preferably, supplied on an IBM-formatted floppy disk, saved as either a text file or an ASCII file. Hard copy, printed as described above, should accompany the disk. Submissions not accompanied by an envelope and sufficient postage cannot be returned.

Names and addresses should be written on disks, manuscripts and photos. While every care is taken, we do not accept responsibility for material submitted. Articles represent the views of the authors, and not necessarily those of the publisher.

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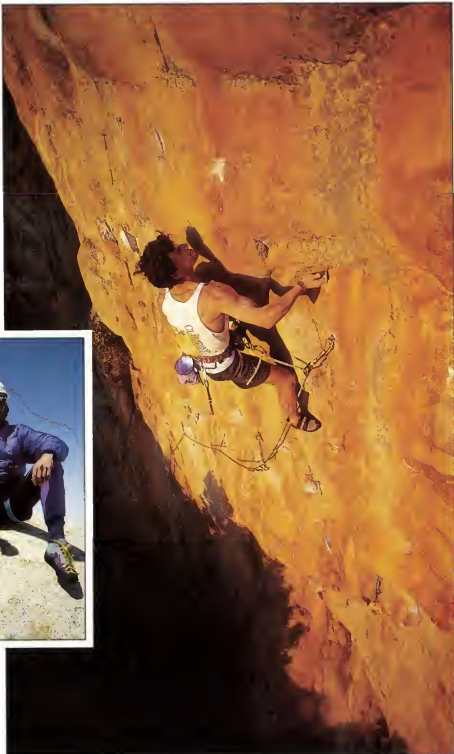
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HARD TIMES

Renaissance in Australian climbing



Athol Whimp (left) and Andrew Lindblade on the summit of Patagonia's fearsome tower, FitzRoy. Lindblade was the first Australian to reach this point. *Lindblade collection.* **Top,** David Jones, one of the new breed of young Australian rock-climbers at the forefront of the sport. **Right,** Stuart Wyithe establishing the country's equal-hardest climb, *Pretty in Punk* (32), at Mt Arapiles, Victoria. Glenn Tempest

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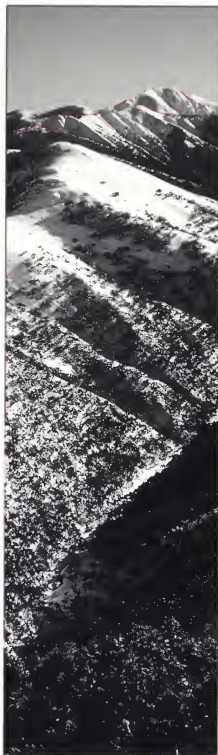


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THE INDEPENDENT SPECIALISTS



New Wave rock stars

Australian climbing is going through one of its periodic surges, with standards soaring and barriers crumbling. Unlike past upswings, which seem to have occurred at intervals of roughly ten years, the present activity at the upper end of the performance scale has been accompanied by a huge influx of new climbers, due mainly to the proliferation of indoor climbing gyms.

The results of this explosion in popularity and ability have not only been evident on the cliffs of Australia: last summer, Australian alpine climbing underwent a 'coming of age' among the soaring granite towers of Patagonia. Most impressively, young Victorian rockclimber Andrew Lindblade teamed with New Zealand alpinist Athol Whimp, now a resident of Melbourne, to climb both FitzRoy—by the long and demanding North Pillar—and Cerro Torre, becoming the first Australian to climb these major mountaineering objectives. Whimp later returned to Cerro Torre to make only the second ever solo ascent. Evergreen alpinist John Fantini and Australian climbing's quiet achiever Simon Parsons made the first Australian ascent of Aiguille Poincenot, adding a new seven-pitch direct finish to the existing Whillans Route; they also climbed Cerro Torre. (The three ascents of Cerro Torre were all by the Maestri Route). Michael Collie and Nick Tapp—both former *Wild* staffers—were turned back only two pitches from the top of the difficulties on the Franco-Argentine Route on FitzRoy, a route also attempted by Fantini and Parsons. A special feature on Australia's Patagonian successes appears in this issue.

Following his first Australian ascent of the country's hardest rockclimb, Punks in the Gym (32) at Victoria's Mt Arapiles (see Information, *Wild* no 49), New South Wales climber Stuart Wythe has established a new climb, Pretty in Punk (32), which now shares not only a small part of the older climb but also its title as 'Australia's hardest'. At about the same time, Melbourne climber David Jones became the second Australian to climb Punks in the Gym. The last Australian to climb at the pinnacle of Australia's Ewbank grading system was Kim Carrigan when he established the Mt Arapiles routes Masada (30, now regarded as 28/29) and India-Ethiopia (31, now regarded as 29) ten years ago.

The regrading of these Carrigan classics illustrates another long-anticipated result of the current surge in standards; for many years the actual difficulty of Australia's grade-30-plus routes was in question because they had seen few repeat ascents and those had inevitably been by international climbers on whistle-stop tours without the time to become familiar with the local grading system. All that has changed now: Australian climbers, many barely (if at all) out of their teens, are queuing at the bases of routes that only two years ago were largely reserved for foreign stars. A number of climbs once considered to be approaching in difficulty the efforts of sensational German climbers Stephan Glowacz (Lord of the Rings [30/31], Mt Arapiles) and the late Wolfgang Güllich (Punks in the Gym), who took Australian climbing by storm in the mid-1980s, have been repeated and even, in

some cases, downgraded by the New Wave of local talent.

What has brought about this overnight revolution? On previous occasions a rise in local standards has usually followed the visit of an international climber who has demolished existing bench-marks by pioneering new levels of difficulty; the classic example being the visit of American Henry Barber in 1975. 'Internationals', however, are no longer

and Margie McIntyre will become the first Australian couple to spend the winter in Antarctica during 1995 when they plan to embark on Expedition Icebound with the support of their patron, 1994 Australian of the Year Ian Kiernan.

Women and adventure

A recent study has provided a wealth of information concerning the involvement of



Lindblade jumaring with a pack full of ice-gear high on the North Pillar of FitzRoy. He and Athol Whimp made three intentional bivouacs on the mountain without sleeping-bags and with little food—the resulting exhaustion occasionally caused them to fall asleep while belaying each other. *Athol Whimp*

an oddity on the Australian climbing scene—on a quiet weekend at Mt Arapiles (if such a thing still exists) they may outnumber the locals. Instead, it seems that this progression has been the inevitable result of the widespread acceptance of once-controversial 'European' ethics that have made the 'working' of safe, hard, bolted rockclimbs the norm. This fundamental change in the nature of the sport is reflected in the proliferation of climbing gyms throughout the country which, in turn, is introducing to literally thousands of new climbers the idea that climbing is a sport which is safe, competitive and popular; an extraordinary departure from its traditional image as dangerous, personal and fringe-dwelling.

Together alone

A New South Wales couple plans to brave 300-kilometre-an-hour winds at the place Douglas Mawson described as 'the home of the blizzard'—Cape Denison, Antarctica. Don

women in outdoor adventure sports. The study, by Jackie Kiewa *et al* at Griffith University in Queensland, polled almost 400 women involved in white-water kayaking, scuba diving and rockclimbing, many of them *Wild* readers. The respondents welcomed the opportunity for escape, socializing and personal development offered by adventure sports, but felt 'success' in their sport was hindered by traditional pressures for women to raise children and run a home.

Corrections and amplifications

From *Wild* no 51: Geoff Mosley's name is misspelt on page 46. The phone number for the ACF Green Bond quoted in the Action Box on page 25 is incorrect. The correct number is 008 332 510.

QUEENSLAND

Around the rim

Peter Treseder has added south-east Queensland's Scenic Rim to the growing list of awesome endurance walks he has completed in record times. The walk, which runs in a 238 kilometre arc from Point Danger on the Gold Coast to the township of Laidley north of Brisbane, usually takes 15–20 days to complete. In March, just weeks after his exploits in

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New Zealand (see item below), Treseder traversed the range in 40 hours and 50 minutes.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Six Foot Track management

Bushwalkers have been promised an increased say in the management of the Six Foot Track, which runs from Katoomba to Jenolan Caves and which has been the subject of planning confusion. The Heritage Lands Trust recently raised the ire of track users by erecting a series of substantial signs at regular intervals along part of the track. This work was halted when it was discovered that planning approval for the signs, which is required under the Blue Mountains City

Council's Local Environment Plan, had not been granted.

The Department of Conservation & Land Management proposes that user groups, landowners and relevant government bodies be represented on a new Advisory Committee which will monitor and co-ordinate use and maintenance of the track. A report by Garry McDougall, a well-known bushwalking writer, identifies a number of management problems including use of the track by trail-bikes and recommends the type of co-operation it is hoped will result from the formation of the new committee.

Roger Lembit

Escalade '95

Following the success of the Escalade '93 mountain festival held at Mt Victoria in the Blue Mountains in April last year, plans are afoot for a second gathering to be held in April 1995. Last year's programme of films, speakers, photographic displays, equipment exhibitions, the National Sport Climbing Competition and social events attracted over 1000 participants.

Information and ticket details can be obtained from Lucas Tribey at the Escalade Festival office, 10 Apex Ave, Mt Victoria, NSW 2786.

Guide dogs?

The first students to graduate from the TAFE Advanced Certificate in Outdoor Guiding completed the course last November. The course was originally offered at the Katoomba TAFE, and is now available in Sydney and New England. Observers suggest that, when considered in conjunction with the travel and tourism industry's desire to accredit guides, the graduation will help to push the fledgling industry closer to control by industry bureaucrats and government.

Russ Grayson

VICTORIA

Melbourne Walking Club anniversary

The Melbourne Walking Club (MWC) celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. Formed as the Melbourne Amateur Walking and Touring Club in 1894, the club took on its present form as a federation of affiliated clubs in 1934 although only three of the eight founding members still exist.

One of the club's most important services to Victorian walkers was the publication of the *Melbourne Walker* from 1929 to 1991, during which time only five editors oversaw the 63 annual editions.

Like their club, MWC members are a hardy lot: members who clock up 50 years of membership (there are 23 at present) receive a special badge of honour and, one would hope, the best seat by the camp fire!

Oxo Man turns 50

The Melbourne University Mountaineering Club (MUMC) will celebrate 50 years of vigorous outdoor activity in October. Founded by the charismatic Thomas Cherry, the club has been active in caving, rock-climbing, kayaking, bushwalking, ski-touring and conservation and was involved with the opening up of Tasmania's South-west

during the 1950s. Its most enduring symbol, the feather-capped Oxo Man, can be seen in log-books throughout the country and has fluttered in the breeze atop peaks from New Zealand to Patagonia.

The club's annual winter Midnight Ascent and black-tie dinner party at the distinctive geodesic dome it built on Mt Feathertop's North-west Spur in the 1960s have become an institution. The MUMC can also take credit for inventing the sport of rogain; the club's (once) annual 24-hour walk was the first event of this kind in the world.

An anniversary dinner will take place on 8 October at the Albert Banquet Centre in Melbourne; past members are encouraged to attend. For details, contact Bill Bewsher at 73 Albert St, Windsor, 3181, or phone (03) 510 5878.

Alpine huts

The Victorian National Parks Service is to undertake a comprehensive survey of the 112 huts in the Victorian Alpine National Park. The survey, which follows similar studies in NSW and the ACT, aims to provide each hut with an accurate record of existing condition, a short history and other key information. Any *Wild* readers with information, including photographs, should contact Graeme Butler on (03) 481 3094.

Cattlemen reopen Mt Magdala track

An old cattle track in Victoria's high country has been rehabilitated by local members of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association. The track, once a stock route, traverses the northern slopes of Mt Magdala, situated on the Alpine Track between the Jamieson River and Mt Howitt. Covered by a landslide below the familiar landmark Hells Window in 1984, the track offers an alternative to the steep climb to the mountain's summit by the Alpine Track.

Little Desert walk

A new 75 kilometre walking track is nearing completion in the Little Desert National Park in western Victoria. The Desert Discovery Walk, for which the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources is producing an information sheet at present, will offer a unique opportunity for extended walking in an environment not often traversed by walkers in eastern States.

The track is expected to be completed by spring of this year, a time when the area is renowned for its wild flowers. For more information, contact the local DCNR ranger at Box 240, Dimboola, 3414 (phone [053] 89 1204), or at Box 64, Nhil, 3418 (phone [053] 91 1275).

Vulcon

The 20th Biennial Conference of the Australian Speleological Federation will be held at Hamilton in central western Victoria on 1-6 January 1995. Hamilton lies in the centre of the world's largest lava flow and the area boasts numerous lava caves, including Australia's longest.

Visits to the lava caves and nearby limestone caves are scheduled in the pre- and post-conference field-trips.

Bookings and further information are available from the Victorian Speleological Association, GPO Box 542CC, Melbourne, 3001.

Wild Diary

Information about rucksack-sports events for publication in this department should be sent to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

June	5	Cross-country Ski Show	Vic	(03) 457 5432
	19	Paddy Pallin Rogaine	NSW	(02) 261 1111
	25-26	24-hour Wilderness Rescue R	NSW	(02) 528 6174
July		Advanced & proficiency testing C	NSW	(063) 85 8443
	23-24	24-hour State Championships R	SA	(08) 258 5696
	30	Cabramurra Tour S	NSW	(064) 53 8721
	31	Telemark Series Dual Slalom S	NSW	(03) 720 4647
		Kingsport Classic S	Vic	(058) 24 2961
August	6-7	River rescue level 2 course C	NSW	(061) 288 5610
	7	Mt Holman Dinner Plain S	Vic	(03) 391 8054
	13	Paddy Pallin Classic S	NSW	(02) 416 7334
	14	Telemark Series Classic-style race S	Vic	(03) 720 4647
	20	12-hour Spring R	NSW	(049) 75 3693
	21	Telemark Series Giant Slalom S	Vic	(03) 720 4647
	27	Kangaroo Hoppit, Australian Bikerbiker, Joey Hoppit S	Vic	(057) 57 3103
September	4	Telemark Series Australian Championships S	NSW	(03) 720 4647
	10	Brown Brothers Mt Holman to Falls Creek S	Vic	(03) 527 4889
		Instructor training & assessment C	ACT	(06) 288 5610
	17	12-hour Rogaine	ACT	(06) 245 7816
		12-hour Spring R	SA	(08) 258 5696
	17-18	Teletest S	NSW	(03) 720 4647
October	4-7	Ski & Outdoor Trade Show (trade only)	ACT	(03) 482 1206
	8-9	Introductory sea kayak course	NSW	(064) 94 1366
	15-16	Australian Championships R	NSW	(042) 85 4053
	22-23	Hawkesbury Classic Paddie C	NSW	(02) 520 5834
November		Basic skills instructor course C	NSW	(02) 958 6908
	5-6	Proficiency testing C	NSW	(02) 809 6993
December	3-4	Sea kayak proficiency NSW (064) 93 5035		

B bushwalking C canoeing F rogaining RC rockclimbing M multisports S skiing



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TASMANIA

Tasmanian walking information

The Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service has produced a range of informative material for walkers intending to visit any of the State's wild places. Note-sheets, a bushwalking code and a brochure on the increasing problem of *Phytophthora Root Rot* (transmitted by muddy walkers' boots), among other useful publications, have been made available by the service in an attempt to reduce the impact walkers have on the environment through which they pass.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Secret of academic success

Wild reader Gordon Begg has sent us a copy of the front page of the 23 February issue of *South Australia's Hills & Valley Messenger* which features a large photo of 'local lads



Andrew Lock on the summit of the second-highest (and, by general consensus, the hardest) mountain in the world—K2. Lock became the third Australian to climb this mountain when he reached the summit without auxiliary oxygen in July last year. *Lock collection.* **Right,** Geoff Wyatt cramps his way to a record 36th ascent of New Zealand's Mt Aspiring. His most recent ascents have been with the (21–24-year-old) children of his original climbing partner! *Wyatt collection*

Simon Young and Justin Koukourou bask[ing] in their merit certificate win for outdoor education—they were apparently the only South Australians to win such a qualification—reading recent copies of *Wild* and *Rock*.

Adelaide Metrogaine

The South Australian Rogaining Association held its first Metrogaine on 12 March, an event won by the team of Andrew Babarat and Morris Allen in a time of 5 hours and 50 minutes. The course covered a wide variety of terrain incorporating six Recreation Parks on the southern fringes of Adelaide.

David Chandler

OVERSEAS

Treseder's NZ holiday

In ten days during January–February, Peter Treseder (see item above) completed an amazing north–south traverse of New Zealand by bicycle, foot and kayak. Starting at Cape Reinga, the northernmost point of the North Island, Treseder cycled to Wellington, climbing the North Island's highest peak, Mt Ruapehu, *en route*. Following this, he paddled a standard kayak across Cook Strait to Picton, from where he cycled to St Arnaud. He then traversed—on foot—the Nelson Lakes and Arthurs Pass National Parks and all the country in between, finishing at Arthurs Pass. From there Treseder cycled down the west coast to the point where the Copeland valley meets the sea. Pausing only to don crampons (over his running shoes) and complete a sea-to-summit grand traverse (Low, Middle and High Peaks) of Mt Cook by way of the

days after arriving at the mountain. After the 1990 ascent by Greg Child and Greg Mortimer, his was the second Australian ascent of K2. The climb was made without auxiliary oxygen or high-altitude porter support. Four of the five-man team reached the summit.

At present Lock is heading back to Pakistan to join a Swedish expedition attempting a new climb on the South-west Face of Broad Peak (8047 metres).

Another noted Australian mountaineer, Greg Mortimer, also expects to be active in the Broad Peak area. In August he will join a team



heading for Chongtar (7370 metres), in the wild region north of K2, one of the highest unclimbed peaks in the world.

Young Australians in Nepal

Peter Hillary, son of Mt Everest first-ascentist Edmund, is hoping that the success of his April 1993 Young Australians to Everest programme will be repeated on an annual basis. Eighty Australian teenagers returned from Nepal motivated and inspired after working on Himalayan Trust projects and experiencing both the culture and the wilderness of the Himalayas.

The 1994 programme was designed so that participants could assist with important tasks in the National Park and the Conservation Area, as well as at local schools and monasteries.

Patagonian tracks closed

The Tierra Del Fuego National Park in southern Argentina is currently closed to adventure walkers. A few small walks are still possible but the park's major walks—as described in *Lonely Planet's Trekking in the Patagonian Andes* (see Reviews, *Wild* no 46)—are banned at present. The closure, which has been in force since 1992, is believed to be a result of politics over funding (So what's new? Editor).

All is not lost, however; remote walking giving similar views and wilderness experiences to those found inside the park is still possible in the area surrounding the park. The adventurous nature of these walks is enhanced by the lack of good maps to the area. ■

Campbell Mercer

Copeland Pass, he proceeded on his bicycle to the Bluff, the southernmost point of the South Island.

To warm down, Treseder kayaked across the Foulfoux Strait to Stewart Island in order to climb Mt Anglem. On the return paddle he lost his kayak and, presumably undaunted, swam the ten kilometres to shore.

Record Mt Aspiring ascents

Veteran mountain guide Geoff Wyatt crammed up Mt Aspiring six times during last summer to record the highest number of individual ascents of the imposing New Zealand peak. From his Wanaka-based mountain school, the 48-year-old Tasmanian-born professional, and regular *Wild* contributor, has accumulated a total of 36 ascents over 28 years.

Heady stuff

Unreported from last year was the ascent of K2 (8611 metres), the world's second-highest peak, by Andrew Lock as a member of a German expedition to the Abruzzi Ridge. Lock reached the summit on 30 July, just 24

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

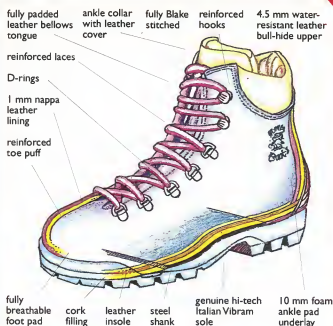


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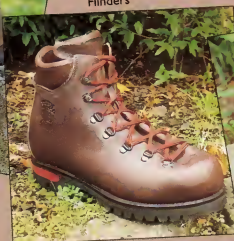


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Mt STIRLING RESORT?

Public backlash puts Victorian Government on back foot

Mt Stirling outcry

Controversy erupted in March over plans by the Alpine Resorts Commission (ARC) to develop Victoria's Mt Stirling as yet another downhill ski resort and link the mountain to the resort at Mt Buller by means of a gondola 'sky-way'. The Victorian Minister for Natural Resources, Geoff Coleman, led a push to hand control of both mountains to the Grollo construction group's Mt Buller Ski Lift Company, which would then develop an extensive new ski village above the Mt Stirling snow-line and connect it with Mt Buller by a visually intrusive cable-car.

Mt Stirling, 200 kilometres north-east of Melbourne, is one of Victoria's most popular cross-country skiing venues, and is at present the location of two relatively unobtrusive huts on the upper mountain and a car-park at Telephone Box Junction. The mountain has been seen as an ideal site for the development of year-round ecotourism and is already the home of such mixed-use activities as camel safaris and nature walks. A local community group, the Mt Stirling Development Task Force, was established late last year in order to encourage carefully planned ecotourism activities on the mountain. The group became the focus of opposition to the ARC's plans, including a court injunction that cited the ARC's 'failure to consult' over the planned development. Talks between the ARC and Mt Buller Ski Lift Co have been proceeding in secret for many months despite a statement in the Commission's 1992-93 Annual Report expressing broad agreement with ecotourism

The faces of Mt Stirling: **top**, the evening solitude of a bush campsite near the summit, with a view to the Bluff. Glenn van der Kriff. **Right**, Mt Stirling from the south side of the Howqua valley. Ross Scott. **Bottom**, protesters at a Wilderness Society rally in Melbourne following the announcement of the Mt Stirling-Grollo 'deal'.



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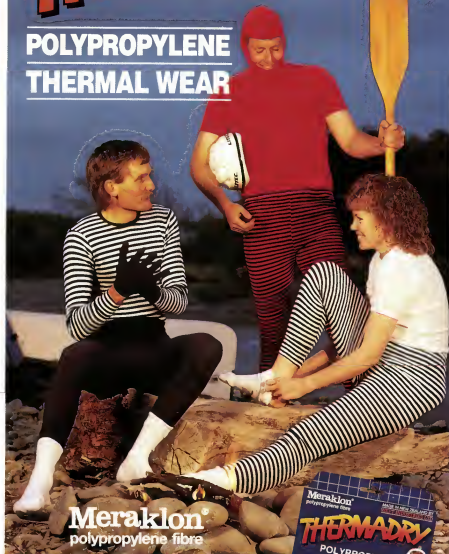
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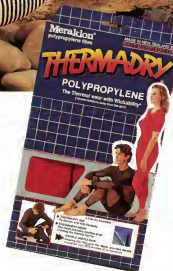
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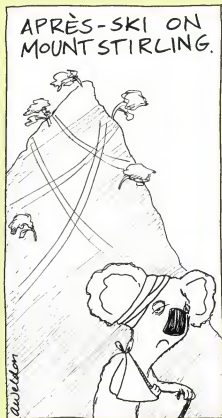
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proposals for Mt Stirling. At a public meeting attended by both residents and representatives of the interested parties, ARC chief executive Philip Bentley claimed that no conflict existed between the principles of ecotourism and the proposed construction of accommodation, downhill ski-runs and the contentious gondola 'sky-way'.



But in April Geoff Coleman was forced to back away from his hard-line pro-development stance after the Liberal Party's State Conference (held in late March) passed a resolution calling on the State Government to freeze plans for the resort until a comprehensive review of the ARC could be carried out. Earlier, the local Liberal MP, Graeme Stoney, had broken party lines by opposing the plans and further claimed that the Grollo company was likely to be given freehold tenure of 500 hectares of land on the mountain rather than the long-term leases that cover other alpine resorts.

The call for an inquiry into the ARC follows accusations of mismanagement and resultant environmental damage at resorts throughout Victoria. In 1988, 3000 litres of oil spilled from the resort at Falls Creek, badly polluting a creek, while later that year landslides at Mt Hotham were linked to work on downhill ski-runs. More recently, the construction of a \$500 000 dam to aid snow-making activities at Mt Buller has raised concerns that natural run-off patterns on the mountain will be severely altered. The long-awaited probe into the ARC's operations was finally announced in late April along with the decision to embark on a 'comprehensive Environmental Effects Statement' on the planned resort at Mt Stirling, moves which seem to postpone

indefinitely any decision to proceed with the development. The review will report to the minister and will not consider the role the ARC should have, but only how it fulfils its present role. Some conservation groups, however, are concerned that the ARC review is merely a stalling tactic to hose down criticism of the apparently secretive way in which plans for the Mt Stirling resort were concocted, and are calling for the government to rule out downhill skiing on the mountain completely.

The ARC has announced that, regardless of the outcome at Mt Stirling, the Grollo group is likely to take over a range of services at the existing Mt Buller resort, including the Ski Patrol, fee collection, garbage removal, snow clearing and the supply of water, gas and electricity. See Action Box item 1.

Wilderness: the future

The Fourth National Wilderness Conference, held in Sydney on 8-10 October last year, focused its attention on the need for the

conservation movement to rely less on government action in preserving wilderness areas in years to come. The gathering, last held in 1983, noted the absence of legislated wilderness areas—with the exception of Kakadu—outside Australia's south-eastern States and established a three-member task-force to develop a campaign proposal based on the need for a National Wilderness Protection System by the year 2000. The task-force report was circulated among conservation groups in April. See Action Box item 2.

Geoff Mosley

Alps World Heritage report

A government-commissioned report into the World Heritage values of the Australian Alps has concluded that a strong case exists for the World Heritage listing of much of Australia's alpine region. *The International Significance of the Natural Values of the Australian Alps*, by Hobart University's Jamie Kirkpatrick, has been widely quoted in the press and recommends both a rapid phasing out of stock grazing in the Alpine National Park and no further residential, recreational or hydro-electric development in the area, activities that had resulted in the integrity of parts of the region being comparatively poor.

The report was commissioned by the Australian Alps Liaison Committee, a body that seeks to facilitate a common approach to management in Australia's alpine areas which stretch across three States and are thus under the jurisdiction of three separate State 'conservation' departments. The committee manages some 30 co-operative programmes every year, and is responsible for the distinctive black, blue and white logo that is increasingly appearing throughout the Australian Alps.

GM

Tropical timber conference

The World Wide Fund for Nature and the Australian Timber Importers' Federation held a joint conference in Sydney on 15-16 April to discuss issues relating to the world-wide trade in rain-forest timber and the impact of this trade on indigenous people and ecosystems. The conference, attended by delegates from Australia, South-east Asia and the South Pacific, endorsed the goal of the International Tropical Timber Organization to produce an ecologically sustainable tropical timber trade by the year 2000.

Adventure travel conference

The World Congress on Adventure Travel and Ecotourism convenes in Hobart between 7 and 10 November this year. The conference, which it is hoped will focus world attention on Australia—and on Tasmania in particular—as a relatively unspoilt travel destination, intends to address issues such as environmental sustainability, the profitability of ecotourism and the marketing of nature-based tourism, among others. Six hundred delegates, including keynote speakers such as Canada's David Suzuki and Tasmania's own Bob Brown, are expected to attend the conference, which will be run by the Adventure Travel Society based in Denver, Colorado. See Action Box item 3.

Action Box

Readers can take action on the following matters covered in Green Pages in this issue.

1 The Victorian National Parks Association is co-ordinating opposition to the Mt Stirling plans, including a fund-raising *Adventurers' Evening* on 24 June with speakers including Tim Macartney-Snape. Interested parties are urged to make submissions to the review of the ARC. Details are available from John Bales on (03) 412 4405, or the NPFA on (03) 650 8296.

2 Copies of the report *Wilderness: the Future*, which includes proceedings of the conference, are available for \$24.95 (plus \$2.50 postage) from the Colong Foundation, 88 Cumberland St, Sydney, NSW 2000, or phone (02) 252 4975.

3 For more information, contact Delia Nicholls, the Media Liaison Officer for Tasmania's Department of Tourism, Sport & Recreation on (082) 30 8141.

4 For more information, contact the Kowmung Committee at GPO Box 2090, Sydney 2001, or phone (02) 560 5993.

5 Successful spotters or anyone wanting more information on the NPWS's Recovery Plan for the rock wallaby should contact the Natural Resources Coordinator, NPWS Southern Region, PO Box 733, Queanbeyan, NSW 2620.

6 For more information, contact ranger Cath Ireland at the Heritage Centre, phone (047) 87 8877.

7 For further information, contact the committee's Photographic Competition, PO Box 7, Leura, NSW 2780.

8 For details on connecting to the data base, for disk copies of the *Red Index* or printed updates, write to the Colong Foundation for Wilderness at the Gloucester Walk, 88 Cumberland St, Sydney, NSW 2000, or phone (02) 247 4714.

9 Copies of the document are available from the Department of Environment & Land Management, GPO Box 44A, Hobart, Tas 7001.

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Clare Carson, Wilderness Designer

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QUEENSLAND

'Sky-rail' fast-tracked

The Queensland Government appears to be moving closer to approving the controversial Cairns-Kuranda Sky-rail project, a tourist cable-car that would pass through the Barron Gorge National Park in the mountains inland from Cairns. The Cairns and Far North Environment Centre has released documents which indicate that the Queensland Government intends to bypass the Wet Tropics World Heritage Management Authority, the Commonwealth Government body responsible for overseeing Australia's commitment to Queensland's threatened tropical World Heritage Areas.

Ex-loggers 'content'

A social-impact study carried out in local communities affected by the cessation of logging on Fraser Island has found most ex-loggers to be both employed and content with their new lives. The findings seem to justify a \$38 million spending package established by the State and Federal Governments to allay fears that the logging town of Maryborough would be destroyed by the end of logging in the area.



Debris chokes a canyon in the Blue Mountains, a result of higher than usual run-off from bushfire-affected terrain. *Lucas Trihey*

NEW SOUTH WALES

Blue Mountains green again

The Blue Mountains are slowly recovering from the disastrous bushfires of January as new growth begins to appear among the blackened stumps. Many walking tracks in the National Park have been closed in order to assist with the rehabilitation process and these should be reopened by mid-year.

Bushwalkers returning to fire-affected areas have reported that a number of illegal roads

have appeared in National Parks. One of particular concern runs between Mt Coricudgy and Mt Kerri in Wollemi National Park; soil erosion from this road has already become a problem. The National Parks & Wildlife Service is hoping to prevent further use of the road and asks bushwalkers to report to their Mudgee office any vehicle seen using the road.

In February public demand for a closer look at the devastated areas led to the NPWS offering special 'regeneration tours', which proved to be enormously popular.

Although most canyons in the Grose and Wollangambe regions are open, extra caution should be exercised in all canyons due to the greater risk of flash-flooding posed by increased run-off in the fire-affected areas.

Lucas Trihey and Roger Lembit

NPWS smuggling allegations: controversy continues

Allegations that NPWS staff have been involved in corruption relating to the illegal trade in native wildlife have continued to bedevil NSW Environment Minister Chris Hartcher. Following the publication of Raymond Hoser's book *Smuggled* (see Green Pages and Reviews, Wild no 50) and stories on 'The 730 Report' and in the *Bulletin*, the minister issued press releases claiming that the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) had exonerated his department. Since then, the ICAC's chief investigator, Frank Brown, has been quoted as saying that the allegations contained in *Smuggled* were still being investigated, and that the NPWS had not yet been cleared.

Meanwhile, the book's author was considering legal action against the minister for comments contained in the December press release.

No sand-mining

A proposal to dredge sand from the sea-bed adjacent to the Royal and Botany Bay National Parks south of Sydney has been rejected by the government. Unfortunately, the sand, which is to supply the Sydney building industry, may now be taken from the sensitive Newnes Plateau in western Sydney.

Andrew Cox

Kowmung update

Support is growing to halt flood-mitigation works proposed for Warragamba dam which could result in NSW's most popular wild rivers, the Kowmung, Cox, Nattai and Wollondilly, being submerged under 36 metres of floodwater. The entire habitat of the rare Camden white gum is under threat, along with brush-tailed rock wallaby and platypus populations. A public meeting to discuss the issue will be held on 23 June at 7.30 pm at the Centenary Theatre, Reserve Rd, off the Pacific Hwy, near the entrance to the Royal North Shore Hospital. See Action Box item 4.

AC

Newnes mine to proceed

Plans to extend an underground coal-mine on the Newnes Plateau in the northern Blue Mountains have been approved despite concerns that the mine will damage fragile rock formations and plants in the area.

Meanwhile, momentum is gathering for the establishment of a Gardens of Stone National Park to incorporate the remaining unprotected sections of the plateau and surrounding areas.

AC

Wilderness remains stalled

National Party members opposing wilderness declarations in NSW have brought internal tensions within the government to a climax following the disappointing announcement in December that only one-tenth of the State's remaining wilderness will be protected. Further delays in formal wilderness declarations for these areas increase the chance of rival activities being given priority.

The NSW Surveyor General has been directed to assess claims of existing interests in three wilderness areas which, if proven, will exclude them from the final wilderness declaration.

Pressure is still on the NSW Government to declare ten identified wilderness areas (three times greater than the government's announced areas) with conservation groups threatening legal action over the government's breach of its own *Wilderness Act* in declaring less than the total area identified as wilderness.

AC

Wanted: rock-wallaby spotters

The NPWS is seeking help from bushwalkers and rockclimbers in finding elusive brush-tailed rock wallabies. Populations of this marsupial, which can be distinguished by its agile movements in steep or rocky terrain, have been declining in recent years, probably as a result of predation by feral animals. Once widespread throughout the mountainous terrain of eastern Australia, numbers are critically low in Victoria and southern NSW. In the Blue Mountains, populations are known from Jenolan Caves, Church Creek Caves, Warragamba Gorge, the Nattai River area and the Wolgan Valley. See Action Box item 5.

RL

Blue Gum Forest activities

At a planning day held at Blackheath by the Friends of Blue Gum Forest, camping-ground management was discussed in the light of increased pressures on this popular bushwalking destination. In addition to looking at establishing an alternative campsite, the Friends plan a number of Activity Days throughout the year.

A review meeting will be held on 30 July. See Action Box item 6.

RL

Blue Mountains photography competition

An amateur-photography competition that aims to promote the unique qualities of the Blue Mountains is being organized by the Blue Mountains World Heritage Committee. See Action Box item 7.

AC

Wilderness Red Index goes live

The Colong Foundation's well-known *Wilderness Red Index* is now on computer data base and available for on-line use. It has also been

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expanded to contain entries concerning wilderness areas in every State in Australia. See Action Box item 8.

Environmental rationalism

A new Sydney-based environmental lobby group, the Environmental Economics Society, aims to highlight the failure of economic rationalism to treat economics and the environment as related, and interacting, fields. Membership of the society, which will give particular emphasis to 'green' employment, is open both to companies and individuals. The society can be contacted on (02) 252 4975, or fax (02) 241 1289.

VICTORIA

East Gippsland blockades

Following the Federal Government's renewal of wood-chip export licences last December, the East Gippsland Forest Alliance staged a summer of protests both in the old-growth forests of Victoria's east and in Melbourne. Logging operations were hindered by the construction of 30 metre high tripods on top of which protesters sometimes remained for days on end. These structures were often enmeshed in webs of steel cable attached to adjacent trees, a ploy intended to thwart efforts to remove the tripod-sitters. On at least one occasion the felling of trees in the vicinity of protesters is believed by the EGFA to have endangered lives. Dozens of arrests were made during the summer. Further controversy resulted from the use by Victorian Police of karate-style 'pressure-point' holds to disperse peaceful protesters at an EGFA rally in Melbourne in February. The tactics, which prompted a review of police procedures, were widely criticized by both doctors and civil liberties groups.

In March, the Wilderness Society criticized the partial release by the Kennett Government of a federally funded report on the old-growth forests of East Gippsland. The Old Growth Forest Survey, which identified that 48 per cent of Victoria's old-growth forest lies outside National Park boundaries, is believed to have made 21 recommendations as to future management of these areas, including the need for a study of the relationships between old-growth forests and their dependent fauna. The recommendations were cut from the final report by the Victorian Department of Conservation & Natural Resources. See the article on the East Gippsland forests in this issue of *Wild*.

Public land; private profit?

The State Government's Tourism Development Committee report *Tourism Victoria—Strategic Business Plan*, released last October, has encouraged the establishment of privately owned and operated accommodation in Victoria's National Parks. The report identifies a number of parks which it considers suitable for 'visitor services including walking, horse-riding [and] 4 wheel driving'. Referring specifically to privately owned and operated facilities in Tasmania, such as the controversial commercial Overland Track huts, the report suggests that 'comfortable accommodation' and 'guided walks' could be established in some of Victoria's best walking

country—the Grampians, the Alpine National Park, along the Cape Otway coastline and at Wilsons Promontory.

The report, which encourages the Mt Stirling-Grollo development and has been cited by the Minister for Natural Resources in support of that scheme (see first item), bemoans the halting of several projects by the need to undertake a 'costly Environmental Effects Statement', and recommends that the planning approval assessment process be made shorter.



One possible solution to track degradation in South-west Tassie? Or just preparation for the day 'the Hydro' dams the lot? Ted Mead collection

TASMANIA

Arthur Range degradation

Concerns about the degradation of walking tracks in the Western and Eastern Arthur Ranges has resulted in the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service publishing a note-sheet for walkers intending to visit this popular but extremely fragile area. In the long run, the restriction of walker numbers through the implementation of a permit system seems inevitable; in the meantime, the service recommends that prospective walkers familiarize themselves with PWS information and think seriously about their environmental impact before walking in the range.

Marine invasion

Water discharged from foreign ships, including Japanese wood-chip tankers, is

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GREEN PAGES

believed to have introduced at least 14—possibly more—exotic species into Tasmania's marine environment. The worst of these, the Pacific sea-star, has already destroyed populations of native shellfish and has the potential severely to affect mussels, abalone and oysters.

Cave plan

The PWS has released its management plan for the Kubla Khan State Reserve. After a three-year moratorium on access to Kubla Khan Cave, probably Australia's most impressive cave, the management plan came into effect on 2 March. The plan recommends increased measures to protect the caves in the area, including underground track marking; 'boots-off', 'helmets-off' and 'overalls-off' areas; no-go areas; a permit fee and a limit of 12 permits a year with no more than six people a permit. See Action Box item 9.

Stephen Bunton

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Yumbarra threat

The 327 589 hectare Yumbarra Conservation Park on the west coast of South Australia is under threat after the discovery of a geological anomaly in the park by airborne geophysical surveys. The State Government is being pressured to allow further exploration and possibly mining to proceed in Yumbarra, which is home to the endangered mallee fowl and other threatened species.

David Chandler

Cave hope

Sellicks Hill Quarry Cave, 50 kilometres south of Adelaide, has been given a temporary reprieve by the Supreme Court, which recently revoked the earlier removal of an injunction on mining within 30 metres of the cave. The cave, which is on private land to which access has been denied, has never been fully explored but is still subject to an interim Heritage Listing by the State Heritage Commission. The cave is described by speleologists as 'of significant value'; its entrance has been blocked by recent blasting, and the extent of the damage to the rest of the cave is not known.

DC

Radioactive leak

The monitoring of radioactive waste from Western Mining Corporation's Olympic Dam uranium-mine in far north SA continues to raise alarm. The leaking of radioactive water from the mine's tailings dam has been known to the Department of Mines & Energy since 1987 but the extent of the problem has been masked by heavy rainfall during recent years. With the apparent rise of the water-table during this period, concerns have been expressed that radioactive water will contaminate the artesian basin that feeds much of inland Australia with vital water. WMC is believed to be acting to prevent this potential disaster. ■

DC

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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Mt Cook National Park.
Photo: Alex McConnell

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MONT



PLAYING LOW

Delightful diversions for the tent-bound, by *Monica Perrymeant*

Stuck in a tent or hut? Let your imagination run wild and you can come up with some silly ideas. Bag a peak or two from the comfort of your sleeping-bag. Invent a new language. Gamble away your precious supply of chocolate. Play a mind game—why did the man go into a restaurant, order an albatross salad, take a mouthful, then run outside and throw up? Read on...

Just about every outdoor adventurer has spent time hut- or tent-bound due to the vagaries of 'mother nature'. To most people a few hours or even a day or two can represent a most welcome enforced rest. Time to sleep, to chat with friends, to finish reading that compelling novel you started ages ago, to cook up some gourmet treats.

But what do you do when everyone's read everything twice (including the labels on all the food packets), you've slept enough to last you for a month and you've eaten your way through quite a bit more food than you'd expected?

Having been in this situation on an unfair number of occasions, my friends and I began to invent games to keep ourselves amused.

Over the years we have found that this approach can greatly relieve some of the frustrations caused by being unable to continue with the trip. It can also draw the group more closely together and is a great way to break down barriers between your group and others sharing the same hut or campsite.

The games described below need very little, if any, equipment. A few dice, a pen and a good sense of fun are all that's required. Don't get too hung up on rules; I find that the rules change almost every time a game is played. Be creative, and you'll be surprised how quickly the blizzard seems to blow over.

Dictionary

As the name suggests, this game requires a dictionary. Although I have yet to meet anyone who carries a dictionary in his or her pack for 'literary emergencies', I have often encountered such a volume in huts scattered all over the high country.

The larger the group, the more hilarious this game can become. One person uses the dictionary to select a word which it is hoped no one has heard of before. The more obscure the word, the better—and the best words usually have more than one meaning or play upon vivid, ski-starved imaginations.

Everyone else writes down a possible (though usually highly unlikely) meaning for the word in question, with the aim of trying to convince the group that this meaning is the correct one. Emulating the dictionary's writing style helps. All answers, including the real one, are then read out and each person anonymously selects the one he or she imagines to be correct. Points are awarded to those who have successfully convinced others to swallow their false meaning.



Indulging in some old-fashioned light reading—the Budawangs, New South Wales. *Paul Sinclair*

Bag a Peak

Imagine our frustration when, for the third season in a row, we were doomed to spend yet another week tent-bound in an all too familiar Snowy Mountains blizzard. Largely undaunted, we invented a game that would take us all around the *Kosciuszko* 1:50 000 map-sheet without leaving the warmth of our sleeping-bags.

All that is required is a map, one die and a marker of some sort for each person playing. Personal experience has shown that sultanas or grains of rice are safer in this role than Smarties, which seem to become inexplicably 'lost' all the time.

The first throw of the die determines the number of grid squares you can move your marker. The second throw determines the direction in which you must move—one is north, a two is east, a three is south and a four is west. If you throw a five you can throw again. A six means that you miss a turn.

If you land on or near a peak of some sort and can convince the other players that you've climbed it at some stage in your life, you score a point. (Peak-baggers usually love this game.) If your journey lands you at a hut you must miss a turn while boiling up a brew. Even more devastating is a lake—lose a point for skiing on to the 'blue bits'!

Bogong's Revenge

This game was born while Mt Bogong dished out everything imaginable for three days (snow, rain, ice, white-out and gale-force winds). My friend Denise didn't think it was fair to play 'Bag a Peak' as her skiing experience in the area was very limited, so we invented a game that encompasses the whole of Australia and discriminates against no one.

The only requirement is a die. If you throw a one, you must name a mountain anywhere in Australia. If you throw a two, it's a river; a three is a lake; a four is a National Park; a five is a ski resort; and a six means that you miss a turn. If you're a paddler, you could include a rapid; if you're a climber, include the name of a cliff. It sounds easy but you can't repeat something that's already been said and imposing a time limit in which to answer can up the ante somewhat.

Solomon's Dice

This game was first developed while sitting out the kind of rain only South-west Tassie can dish up. Dice are waterproof!

All you need are six of them. A penchant for taking outlandish risks also helps.

The aim is to score 350 or more points in each turn. A five equals 50 points, a one equals 100 points and three of a kind are worth their face value multiplied by 100—for example, three fours equal 400 points. A player starts by rolling all six dice and removing any that score points. These are placed aside and the

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remaining dice are thrown again. After each throw you are obliged to remove the point-scoring dice; if there aren't any, your turn is finished and you score no points for that round.

Some important rules: you may not stop before you reach a score of at least 350; if your throw contains no score you lose the points already accrued in that turn; if you eventually

WILD IDEAS

For markers one of us used Smarties and the other used jelly-beans—winner eats all! I ate a lot of chocolate on that trip.

Mind Games

What do you do when your party is huddled together for hours on a rock ledge waiting for the rain to stop ruining your climb? Naturally you haven't strapped any cards or dice (or a dictionary) to your harness.



Sol Wiener looks as if he'll be lying low for a while. Snowed in near Bluff Spur Hut, Mt Stirling, Victoria. Sol Wiener collection

score with each of the six dice (known as a 'full house') you must continue again with all six and potentially risk losing the lot.

Each person decides when he or she has taken enough of a risk and has too much to lose. Keep rotating the turn—the winner is the first to reach 5000 points.

Pictionary

People often ask me why the backs of many of my maps are covered with weird-looking sketches and scribbles. 'Pictionary' is invariably to blame! It beats carrying scrap-paper.

Obviously you won't have the stockpile of words that the commercially available game supplies so you'll need to improvise. Have everyone in the group write down a large number of nouns, verbs and adjectives on tiny scraps of paper and place them in a billy. The larger the group, the better—you lessen the chance of drawing a word you wrote yourself.

This game is best played in pairs. The first person throws a die; if it's an odd number he or she picks a word out of the billy and then has 60 seconds to draw this word for his or her partner to guess. No verbal communication is allowed. If the partner guesses correctly, they score a point. If an even number is thrown, the person draws the word for *everyone* to guess.

Sleeping-mat Gammon

When a friend unrolled his sleeping-mat on a recent skiing trip I was stunned to see that it was literally covered with game boards, drawn on with black Texta. The portable games-parlour included Backgammon, Chinese Checkers, Draughts, Snakes and Ladders and even a skiing-oriented game he'd invented himself.

Mind games can be anything you want them to be but the more laterally you think, the more devious the plot becomes.

Someone presents a scenario. For example, a person is lying dead beside a rock. Everyone else tries to work out what has happened (in this case, what caused the person to die) by asking questions that can only be answered with 'yes', 'no' or 'irrelevant'. The presenter of the scenario must answer all questions truthfully and try not to yield to the temptation of giving the answer away before the others have worked it out.

It's a good idea to include some information that's likely to send people off in the wrong direction. In this case, the rock in our scenario has most people thinking along the lines of bushwalking when, if they'd bothered to determine its size, they'd have discovered that the rock was actually Uluru! Why was a dead man lying beside Uluru? If he'd simply fallen off, the story would end too quickly; maybe he was an official photographer for a group of Japanese tourists who stepped back a little too far to take that crucial group photo?

So the next time the weather has you stuck somewhere you'd rather not be, use it as a positive experience and gamble away your chocolate, scribble on the back of your maps or stretch lateral thinking to the limit.

Why did the man go into a restaurant, order an albatross salad, take a mouthful, then run outside and throw up? One small clue: it has something to do with being deserted on a desert island. I know my answer, but you might have to try it on your next bunch of hut-bound companions! ■

Monica Perrymeant has been actively involved in a wide variety of outdoor pursuits for the last 15 years. She has succeeded in combining her love of adventure with her passion for travel and now runs her own business organizing exhibitions for the outdoor industry.

PATAGONIA

AUSTRALIAN ASCENTS OF THREE MAJOR PEAKS

A Wild special feature







PATAGONIA

FITZROY AND CERRO TORRE

Andrew Lindblade describes the first Australian ascents of these tempest-lashed spires

On Christmas Day 1993 we arrived at FitzRoy Base Camp in wind and spitting rain, immensely motivated to get on the mountain. We had written in our minds (in Spanish): 'I tell my mother I not go home until I climb them.' Crossing the Rio Blanco on twisted dead logs I sensed the nervous tenderness one gets approaching camp, and there was that near-night beauty that is so distinct at the foot of the mountains. Athol Whimp and I planned to climb FitzRoy by the North Pillar and Cerro Torre by the Maestri Route (East Pillar). Each route was fixed in our minds as absolutely essential for us to climb; our trip was built round ascending these two impressive peaks within a short span of time. It was almost as though they were part of each other, although in truth they could not be more separate. This is the story of our ascents

Below, Whimp on the summit of FitzRoy. **Andrew Lindblade.** **Right,** Lindblade on the second pitch of FitzRoy's North Pillar in perfect conditions. **New Year's Eve.** **Athol Whimp.** **Opposite,** Cerro Torre after a storm. **Simon Parsons.** **Pages 38 and 39,** sunrise over one of the world's most impressive massifs showing, from left to right, Cerro Torre, Aiguille Poincenot and FitzRoy. **John Fantini**



WILD CLIMBING



in Patagonia; of how we conducted ourselves in this crazy, unforgiving environment.

Following Athol's brief bout of sickness, we headed up the hill toward the mountain on 29 December after carrying loads in from Chalten, the 'last outpost'. Athol valiantly carried on, not so much because he felt a lot better, but because of the prospect of fine weather! At a rocky section on the ridge we got the stove going, only to have it cough and grumble and produce an inadequate

that it would fall into perspective as soon as we were making upward progress. Athol led the first pitch up the couloir, which involved many aid moves because much of the snow at the base had melted away, exposing steep, grey granite.

Soon, however, we were forced to return to Base Camp—the stove simply couldn't handle the local kerosene. We strode through the Col Superior and down the slope to Base Camp. Near Lago (lake) de los Tres, an hour above Base Camp, we turned back to see that the

Locher pioneered a new route, taking a line to the right of the original. But at the top col Pedrini fell, and the pair made a hazardous descent, Pedrini with a broken shoulder. It was this route we wanted to complete.

Athol and I reached the first col and began sorting the ropes and protection, ate some hot porridge and decided to leave our sleeping-bags, one set of ice-gear (two tools, crampons and plastic boots) and some of the food behind. We planned to be away for two nights but knew that it could take longer if our time estimates were out. By dusk, at 10.30 pm, we were five pitches up the pillar, hoping to find a ledge on which to bivvy. There was nothing so we abseiled to a sloping ledge leaving two ropes fixed. When I got to the ledge, Athol said to me: 'Andrew, haven't you got a party to go to?' It was New Year's Eve.

A warmth slowly dispersed across my skin as I scanned the horizon; west, north, north-east: clear skies except for a thin stretch of cloud, slightly deadened by the dreaded onset of night. The only pleasure this gave me was the thought of dawn, and getting closer to the summit the next day. To deal with our quiet, personal hunger we shared a bowl of hot orange drink. When the rice pudding was ready, Athol turned the stove off and we both said, almost simultaneously, 'that sound, oh that sound', and the stove croaked itself out. At 6.30 am, after intermittent dozing, constant shivering, much dribbling and our classic porridge brew, we jumared the ropes and attacked the pillar.

I led the first pitch off a hanging belay. A few metres up I looked back at Athol, draped in the two ropes and with the pack hanging next to him. We both knew that we had to move fast and efficiently. Everything I had learnt about rockclimbing came out instinctively. When there is no time for laughing about a great move or complex crux, the mind is absorbed with no more than getting the 50 metres of rope out, tying one off so that the second can jumar while being belayed on



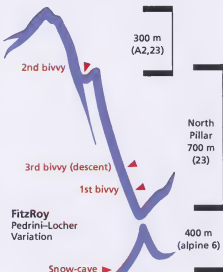
Lindblade abseiling the headwall of Cerro Torre after the ascent. Above him is the daunting summit ice-mushroom which prevents climbers from reaching the 'true' summit of the mountain. Whimp, Opposite, Whimp climbing among the ice-towers of Cerro Torre's Maestri Route. Lindblade

breakfast. We immediately realized that we'd have to go back to Base Camp to get the other stove. At the Col Superior strong winds were cutting the air and slamming into the small cliffs beside us. It was fantastic to return to the harshness of the mountains, where everything becomes a human concern, becomes part of your 'self'. We had chosen these mountains because of their amazing breadth and individuality. The North Pillar is some 1400 metres high, with an initial couloir of 400 metres, the 700 metres of the pillar proper and a final headwall and summit slope of 300 metres. We knew that we had to get out in bad weather if we were to have any chance of getting on to the mountain, so we left the snow-cave and traversed round a small outcrop of stunning granite to gain the expanse of the upper Glacier Piedras Blancas. Big winds rushed over FitzRoy, but it was relatively calm where we were. Soft snow made getting to the foot of the couloir a bit slow but soon enough it appeared overhead. The scale of things seemed inconceivable. Nevertheless, we were both sure

weather had totally cleared! No wind, no clouds. We kept walking down, angry with ourselves for taking a stove that wasn't working properly. The next day we needed to rest. On the evening of 30 December we went up to Lago de los Tres and slept till 3.30 am. The weather was perfect, and by 9 am we were in the couloir stringing the pitches together.

We had the XGK stove with us now—somehow we both knew that it would work. The couloir was about 60' on average, and in bad condition: loose, thin snow often lay over gravelly ice and rocks were occasionally falling from the overhanging wall on our right. In the upper pitches conditions improved slightly and the couloir became steeper. Looking up at the pillar I couldn't help but wonder how fantastic it would be up there. All the height and volume of this mountain, the sparse climbing history on the pillar and our own insignificant presence made me shake my head, but the strength I felt front-pointing up the top of the couloir was enormous.

The final three pitches of the couloir followed a narrow channel of ice with thin seams on either side for protection. There was a lot of fixed protection all the way up from previous ascents—many of these parties must have descended from the first col as the pillar had had only three ascents to the summit. In 1985, Swiss alpinists Marco Pedrini and Kurt



the other rope. Many of the lower and middle pitches were grade 21—usually consisting of finger- and hand-jams, with feet smearing out to the sides of the cracks.

Dressed in salopettes and a lightweight down jacket, and carrying a double rack of Friends and wires, I climbed a steep crack using fist- and arm-locks. Protection went in easily and so the climbing almost became relaxing. The pitch ended at a small, sloping ledge which Athol traversed. We were now in line with the

corners that led to the top of the pillar. Every pitch went smoothly, but time still passed very quickly. Our only food during the day was two portions of Argentine Milka chocolate. This and our lack of sleep were causing us to fall asleep while belaying, cursing ourselves upon waking, and nodding off again. All through this first day of the year the weather was fantastic. It even smelt good. Near the top of the pillar we encountered the dihedral pitch Pedrini

had written about. It had given us inspiration back home. It was Athol's lead (we swapped leads the whole way up), and I watched him bridge up the dihedral, shouting back to me in our stylishly acquired accent: *Chimichurri y Tortas Fritas!* This is what Pedrini and Locher had called the route. Pedrini said in reference to the name: 'Typical Argentine grub.' After leading the next pitch, I belayed in a crack, my thirst made insane by the sound of dripping water behind

the ice in the back of the crack. I looked forward to brewing up at the top notch and shivering another night away. We made two pendulum abseils to land on the notch. Swinging round on one peg 1200 metres above the ground wasn't an issue—we had arrived at the top notch, and hoped with our whole bodies for the weather to hold. We had an awesome setting! The places in which we put our lives! We talked about the summit through the night, working out how long it would take to get there. With all our clothes on we shivered, and imagined the perfect apple pie.

At 6.30 am I led the first pitch off the notch. It was partly verglassed so I aided on wires and Friends until I gained a clean finger/hand-crack. As soon as the sun had risen we began to feel the effects of our sleeplessness: tiredness, slow thinking and an incredible hunger to be on top. 'You've got to work the hardest for the best ones', said Athol as I jumared up to him, now only two pitches from the summit. With only one set of ice-gear, I jumared the easy-angled final slope in rock shoes. We sat there looking everywhere, and I felt nothing but relief. Immediately, I thought of getting down. To the north we saw a grand beast of a mountain. 'Look at that hulk', I murmured. There was no wind—Patagonia had given us what we'd planned on! At 1 pm we began to abseil. After 45 abseils and another grim night we were in the relative security of the snow-cave hardly able to move. We ate rice and

'Athol turned and looked down and said, "Beautiful". Lindblade on Cesare Maestri's compressor, Cerro Torre. Whimp. Right, three pitches from the top of the same mountain, Parsons follows Fantini in descending darkness. Fantini



porridge and tried to understand what we had been through, but it was all too soon. That night we made Base Camp at 10.30 pm for chocolate, dance music and sleep. We knew happiness and understood 'what happened'.

By the second week of January we had moved to Cerro Torre Base Camp. On 12 January we took a load to the rock bivvy, directly below the mountain, three hours' fast walk from Base Camp. The next afternoon we returned to this site in increasingly bad weather, but woke up on 14 January under perfect skies. At 1 pm we were moving swiftly back to the mountain, passing the rock bivvy, and by 11.30 pm were in the snow-cave, waiting

'After 45 abseils and another grim night we were in...the snow-cave hardly able to move.'

for first light. It was incredibly still, and thinking back I recall the thwacking of our ice-tools into the ice to hang gear on as we settled in, and the vast dullness of night. We took only clothing, the stove, some porridge and one block of Milka chocolate between us. We began climbing at 6.30 am in clear, still and not too cold conditions. The climbing was superb; a mixture of cracks and faces leading directly up a fine granite ridge, with the stupendous South Face dropping away on our left and the famous headwall craning out overhead. The aid climbing began around the 11th pitch where we began the bolt traverse, which rises to meet the base of the ice-towers. On a ledge at the base of the ice-towers we put on plastic boots, leaving our rock shoes hanging on a peg to pick up on the way down. Some stunning ice-climbing followed; right through the ice-towers it was squeaky and solid. Chopping ice out from some of the bolts drew blood from my fingers as I smashed and smashed in a single-minded bid to save every minute possible. Athol jumared the last bolt ladder before the headwall while I stared up at it, and then out at the clouds, grey and circling, moving eastwards and deathly quiet save for the gentle zephyr drifting up the South Face.

Although the ominous weather concerned us, we were too close to the summit to turn back. Retreat would only have resulted if we had thought—or perhaps *known*—that we could not descend. I was now cold, and despite extreme tiredness looked forward to moving soon after the end of every pitch. The ice-traverse to the headwall was brilliant; I shall never forget the looping ropes leading to Athol and back to me as I front-pointed across and up to him, and the way his face and eyes looked, drained but extremely solid. This was pitch 21. The desire for warmth

was deep, but Athol launched straight into the headwall amid increasingly dull light and a strengthening wind. There is nowhere to stand and relax on the Torre; its madness lies in the torment of knowing that you are only hours away from the summit and descent, and so stopping seems crazy, a contradiction of your very presence. Athol handed me some gear as I passed him at the belay. I followed Maestri's bolts upwards and right to a series of huge, vertical flakes and waited for Athol in the wind. What an immense place! Athol swung up the continuing bolt ladder which went directly up. Meanwhile I took my headtorch out and attempted to connect the power but the battery dropped out of the casing—I couldn't believe my clumsiness!

When we met at the top of that pitch we looked up and down and out to the sides. We could not go up with only one torch. Abseiling and pulling the ropes meant failure. Athol said: 'We could fix the ropes, and jumar them in the morning if it's fine...' I considered this. 'It's worth it', I said.

We abseiled 100 metres to the thin ice-arete and, hanging on a jumar each with our crampons stabbing into a 70° gully, chopped a ledge, totally preoccupied with our survival through the long night. With our legs hanging over the edge and stuffed into our packs, and with our windproofs on, we managed to feel in control. The wind screamed up the gully and we shivered violently. Athol got the stove going and we had a hot orange drink. Our bodies ached. I dozed off intermittently and was woken by the cold and by saliva streaming from my mouth. We spoke in short bursts, often swearing, and asking each other: 'How's it going?' Later, in Base Camp, I noticed a line in a book: 'There's just a thin sheet of sandpaper between this place and hell.'

The wind died down at about 4 am. We could hardly believe the position we were in now! By 8 am we were at the top of the ropes. The next pitch ends at Maestri's compressor, a hefty piece of gear winched up to enable him to create bolt ladders. A few metres below here I ran out of rope. I tied one off and Athol began jumaring, allowing me to reach the belay. Some desperate moments followed as I heel-hooked the compressor, and clipped in. Athol led the A3 Bridwell pitch. As he stepped up in the etriers, I yelled out 'Go, Bridster, go!' Athol turned and looked down and said, 'Beautiful'. We hung from the top of this pitch and clipped our crampons on, knowing we'd made it. An easy slope led to the area next to the amazing summit ice-mushrooms. We brewed up, had a square of chocolate each and sat for an hour.

The descent went smoothly. That night we slept in sleeping-bags in the snow-cave, waking up in sunshowers of snow.

I was hanging on a belay near the base of the 500 metres of mixed climbing below the snow-cave while Athol abseiled and I *knew* something; the solidness of friendship, the embracing of what is true, the inevitability of life—my eyes became damp; my friend Lisa was arriving soon... the *nature* of it all was too much. I heard my crampons make scratching sounds on the rock. Athol arrived, Cerro



Torre was now in storm, and the sickness of happiness and relief propelled us down to the rock bivvy, and on to Base Camp.

A month later Athol soloed Cerro Torre. He was the second person to do so, the other being Marco Pedrini. A superb end to an amazing trip. ■

**Andrew Lindblade and Athol Whimp
—Patagonia, December-February
1993-94**

Success on:

Fitzroy (3441 m)—Pedrini-Locher Variation, Chimichurri y Tortas Fritas (North Pillar); 45 pitches, grade 23,A2 with ice to 80°.

Cerro Torre (3128 m)—Maestri Route (South-east Ridge); 35 pitches, grade 20,A3 with ice to 75°.

Whimp (solo):

Second solo ascent of Cerro Torre (by Maestri Route).

Andrew Lindblade, 22, lives and trains in Melbourne. He is currently completing a Postgraduate Diploma in English at the University of Melbourne, and works in advertising. His rockclimbing and mountaineering, including several hard ascents, stemmed from a young start in the outdoors, primarily at Timberop in the Victorian Alps.

PATAGONIA

AIGUILLE POINCENOT

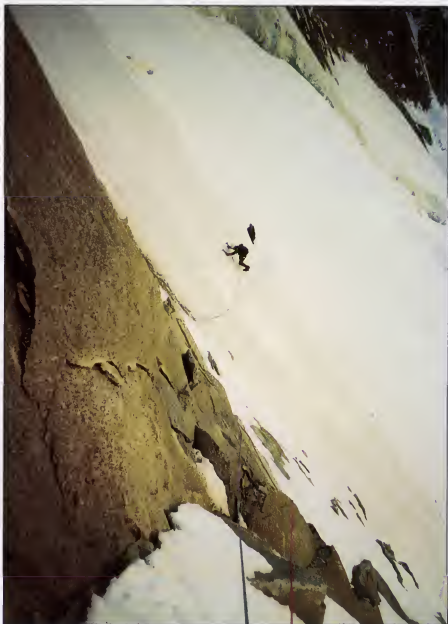
The first Australian ascent, by *Simon Parsons*

Climbing in Patagonia is a unique experience. Words cannot adequately portray the immense physical and mental effort required of us during our repeated attempts to climb these icy granite giants. After six starts from Base Camp and multiple bivouacs high on the mountain, we had finally been rewarded with two consecutive days of fine weather and achieved the summit of Cerro Torre. We had blasted up to the Col of Patience from the village of Chalten in one day and reached the top at 11 pm the following day. There was no view, only a gathering storm and thick darkness pierced weakly by the beams of our headtorches. The storm had struck us during the night, on our descent. Strong winds trapped us in the bergshrund on the col for another day. It had been the complete Patagonian experience.

So what next? We were filled with enthusiasm and confidence and wanted another battle. FitzRoy was the next obvious target. The fastest route up FitzRoy is the 1985 Franco-Argentine Route, a direct but more difficult variation of the 1952 Terray-Magnone line. It is possible to be on the summit within 24 hours of leaving Base Camp—if you don't sleep! A fast approach such as this is the only guarantee against the fickle weather.

The day before our attempt we had carried a load of technical gear and food to Col Superior. We had hoped that the bad weather would continue after our carry—we needed a rest—but by the next afternoon the sky was clear and the winds had dropped. So we slogged back up to the col, arriving at 6 pm. Settled into our sleeping-bags we watched a beautiful sunset with panoramic views of the east side of the FitzRoy massif.

We awoke at 11 pm and were away by midnight. Cramponing up the Glacier Piedras Blancas into the starry, cold night, we rapidly approached the ugly gully that leads to the Italian Col between FitzRoy and Aiguille Poincenot. Eight pitches of mixed climbing with ice up to 80° put us on the tiny col at sunrise. There was a wild view of Cerro Torre to the east. The weather was fantastic and we moved up the ridge to the base of the final 14-pitch headwall. As the rock glowed



Fantini makes the traverse to gain the great East Face ice-ramp on Aiguille Poincenot. The figure behind him is a member of an unsuccessful German team. **Right**, Fantini gives the thumbs up on the knife-blade summit. *Parsons*

orange, coloured by the dawn sun, we gazed up at the pitches above. Ice, ice, ice. Ice was everywhere. Cracks were barely visible. John Fantini decided to try the

first pitch anyway. He took two hours to clean the crack of ice and aid up what would normally take 15 minutes to lead in rock shoes (grade 21). However, he kept yelling how incredible it was to be climbing in such an amazing location, on a pitch first aided by the famous Lionel Terray 42 years earlier. As we were not carrying bivvy gear or a stove, it became

obvious that the summit was out of reach this time. We descended reluctantly, frequently glancing back at FitzRoy and wishing we'd had better luck.

It was then that we noticed Aguille Poincenot, the third-highest peak in the range after FitzRoy and Cerro Torre. First climbed in 1962 by Don Whillans and Frank Cochrane with an Irish expedition, the route follows a magnificent ice-ramp of 55°, tremendously exposed and cutting across the East Face to join the South-east Ridge. It then ascends the ridge for a further ten pitches to the top. Maybe we could squeeze this route in before the inevitable change in the weather. That night we bivvied again on Col Superior and started out once more the next morning, at the slightly more civilized hour of 5 am.

As we approached the base of the ice-ramp the sky was a deep red and dotted with sinister black clouds. The weather continued to deteriorate all day and repeatedly we felt that each pitch would be our last before retreating. Entering the ramp required exposed ice-climbing but we moved quickly and after eight pitches reached the famous chimney pitch. I switched to rock shoes and loaded boots, crampons and ice-tools into my rucksack. Throughout our trip to Patagonia we longed for lighter equipment. Once the packs were filled with ice-gear they were too heavy for comfortable rockclimbing even with a great deal of equipment—including sleeping-bags—sacrificed and bivvies avoided. The chimney above narrowed to a nasty off-width and I was feeling

mighty impressed with Whillans's efforts so long ago. Suddenly I realized that you could step left into an easier, hidden chimney. I bridged up past thick ice that filled the chimney and belayed. John followed, then led a second mixed pitch to easier ground on the crest of the South-east Ridge.

Now the violent wind struck us and from this point to the summit we were constantly buffeted. Hogs'-back clouds had formed over FitzRoy, and Cerro Torre had disappeared altogether. But we continued up. We did not have a route description and there seemed to be a zillion possibilities. After two more pitches of rock-dotted ice-slopes we dumped our ice-gear. Feeling very light we raced directly upwards for a couple of pitches, the second a superb, crescent-shaped hand-crack. Above us now was a huge corner like something out of Yosemite. We moved 50 metres to the right and again our passage was blocked. Which way? Time was running out and the wind was increasing. John tried straight up again and found that the corner was much easier than it looked. Now we were running. Since dropping our packs we had seen no trace of previous parties and no abseil anchors. We were not on the correct route and we could only hope that our line would take us to the top. I vividly recall at one point belaying in a chimney, with the wind whipping the ropes into a spider's web round me, thinking: 'This is crazy, the descent will be a nightmare.' The top now looked close; in

fact, for about five pitches it always seemed only one pitch away! At 6 pm we were finally on the top, hugging each other. There was no room to stand, the summit just a blade of rock you could straddle to peer into the depths on each side.

Now only 20-odd rappels to the glacier were left. We started rappelling off a single rope leaving single slings or nuts as anchors. We kept the second rope in the pack as our insurance against a snagged rope. We sped down rapidly to



our packs and on to the ice-ramp, where we were sheltered from the wind. Reaching the bottom at nightfall, we battled to retrieve a jammed rope and made the glacier in thick mist and sleet. That night we slept in the rain on Col Superior, tired but contented to have climbed our second Patagonian summit despite adverse weather.

Now all that was left was FitzRoy; but that would have to wait for next year. ■

John Fantini and Simon Parsons —Patagonia, January–February 1994

Success on:

Cerro Torre (3128 m)—Maestri Route (South-east Ridge); 35 pitches, grade 20,A3 with ice to 75°.

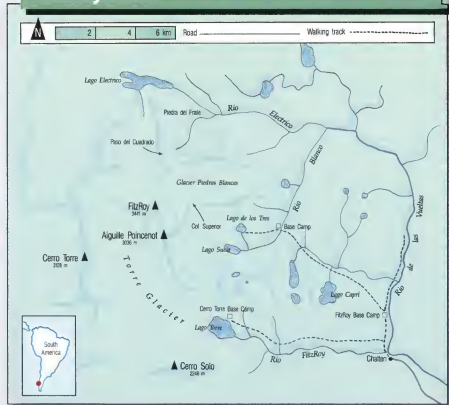
Aguille Poincenot (3036 m)—Whillans Route with new direct finish; 20 pitches, eight new pitches, grade 18 with ice to 55°.

Attempt on:

FitzRoy (3441 m)—Franco-Argentine Route; 22 pitches, grade 21,A2 with ice to 80°.

Simon Parsons is a paediatrician living in Melbourne. He started climbing in Tasmania at the age of 13 and has climbed extensively in Europe, the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. He rockclimbs up to grade 30 and was a member of the team which made the first Australian ascent of the Cassin Ridge, Mt McKinley, in 1991.

FitzRoy area





Peter



WILD BUSHWALKING

Dombrovski

PETER DOMBROVSKIS

Australia's pre-eminent wilderness photographer, by Peter Jackson

It was like the sighting of a rare species of bird, or some fabulous creature from another dimension, to come across Peter Dombrovskis working in the bush. Years ago, on a cold, wet morning, we saw him: at first just a yellow fly-sheet stretched between trees, then an economical arrangement of gear beneath. There was something reminiscent of the imagined nineteenth century explorer about the isolation of his camp and the systematic layout of his equipment. The figure in thermals and shorts turned to reveal that unmistakably tilted head of Peter Dombrovskis.

He did look like a scientist on a field-trip; miles from anywhere, efficiently assessing his specimens, watching the bush arrange itself around him. We could see him tuning in to the immediacy of a landscape which is often just seen in transit. Certainly it is seldom condensed into the meticulous organization of detail and theme which has characterized his photography for over 20 years. On that occasion, the rain-soaked trunks with their glistening green and russet streaks were destined to appear in the calendar for October 1988.

The Dombrovskis publications have been a benchmark in wilderness photography since the early 1970s. His wilderness calendar was really the first in Australia as his friend and fellow photographer Geoff Lea recalls: '[Dombrovskis] was the first with the best. From the outset he set the standard and it still has not been exceeded.'

Dombrovskis was born in Wiesbaden, Germany, in 1945. His earliest vivid memories are of walking up the banks of the local stream through waterfalls and rapids. The experience remains a primal influence to this day. His parents were Latvian, but his father disappeared during the war. His mother decided to flee Europe. She chose to go to Australia because North America was still in the Northern hemisphere; too close to the trauma and turmoil of Europe.

After some months in Sydney, his mother visited Tasmania and they soon moved to the greener, even more distant location of Hobart. As for so many other migrant children of the post-war era, the traumas of school life were accentuated by not being able to speak English; at home Dombrovskis still spoke Latvian. He attended Hobart High School and proceeded to university to study science for a time before being drafted for national service.

Dombrovskis was first introduced to the Tasmanian wilderness by his mother who, during the 1950s, took him through the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. However, the major influence on his later life was to come from a Lithuanian migrant who has left a lasting impression with many Tasmanians. In 1961 Dombrovskis attended a National Fitness Council Adventure Camp at Esperance. There he met Olegas Truchanas, who was working as a canoe instructor. The charismatic Truchanas, with his immense experience, made a deep impression.

Dombrovskis became completely absorbed with white-water canoeing and was out for adventure. As he says, 'At 16 years of age I didn't have the temperament or inclination to hang around taking photos'.

He canoed the Pieman River three times, spending his 18th birthday on that river with Truchanas. More than 100 trips

set Dombrovskis on the road to becoming the pre-eminent wilderness photographer of the last 20 years. However, 1972 was to be a very decisive year...

Truchanas lost! It seemed unthinkable. All Hobart—no, all Tasmania—was talking about it. He had seemed indestructible, his achievements had made him a legend in his own time. It seemed fitting that, after days of searching by so many, it was Dombrovskis and a friend who finally found the body. Ironically, Truchanas had drowned in the mighty



Dombrovskis on the now lost Pieman River in 1963. Olegas Truchanas. Right, reviewing transparencies at his light-table in January this year. Peter Jackson. Pages 48 and 49, autumn at Waterfall Valley, Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. Peter Dombrovskis. Page 52, Dombrovskis at work with his trusty Linhof Technica. Jackson

down the Huon River and a five-day trip down the Derwent from the Catagunya dam site provided an excellent grounding for his important efforts in the Wild Rivers campaign of the late 1970s. Ironically, the Catagunya trip is no longer possible after the intrusion of an intensive hydroelectric development and the Pieman, which Dombrovskis considers to have been Tasmania's finest canoeing river, was destroyed by the completion of that scheme in 1987.

Dombrovskis took years to decide what he really wanted to do. He tried science at university, went to art school, and spent some time doing national service as a conscript. On returning to Hobart, Truchanas suggested that Dombrovskis try architecture. After a few years he began to work as a draftsman and for the first time had money for boots, skis and a car. He was also spending more time in the bush, partly as an escape from the public service employment which was stifling him. He hated the bureaucracy, the lack of encouragement to give of his best and the absence of any real challenge. These factors alone may have been enough to

Gordon River he was fighting so hard to preserve.

The second trauma of 1972 was the destruction of the jewel of South-west Tasmania—the flooding of Lake Pedder. The lake, with its unique beach of fluted sand, the seasonal change in its water-levels and its magnificent setting beneath the Frankland Range, was irreplaceable. The battle to save Lake Pedder had ended in defeat. Those who understood its value were disillusioned by the State's grand plan for ever more growth. From a purely historical perspective, it is perhaps hard for a new generation to appreciate the loss. Dombrovskis felt it deeply. As he says: 'The flooding of Lake Pedder is a burden which I still carry around today.'

Lake Pedder flooded. Truchanas dead. Dombrovskis assumed the responsibility of raising public awareness of the beauty of Tasmania's threatened wilderness.

Following his epic solo trips, Truchanas had presented memorable slide-shows in the town hall. Through his charisma and skill as a raconteur, he had conveyed his adventures to a fascinated public. Dombrovskis knew that would not be his style. His photos were going to focus on the wilderness rather than on his personal experiences.

The first decade of Dombrovskis's career demonstrated his twin commitments—the presentation of pure wilderness to a wide audience through his

photographs, and the development of technical excellence. His first calendar came out in 1973 and within a couple of years all trace of urban scenery had gone. In 1977 he released *The Quiet Land*, a book which proved to be a turning-point in his emerging aesthetics. His large-format calendars have all contained penetrating essays on the environment by invited writers. By 1983 Dombrovskis's style and production had reached the exceptional quality exemplified by the magnificent *Wild Rivers* book.

The genesis of this book was a trip Dombrovskis had been inspired to make following Bob Brown's historic 1976 journey down the Franklin River. It was to be the first of three occasions on which Dombrovskis ventured down this river, a trip which he combined with others down the Denison and lower Gordon Rivers and visits to the headwaters of the Franklin. Each time he travelled alone for up to three weeks, carrying his food, gear, tripod and the 5 x 4 inch Linhof Teknika camera which he used for all the photos.

Collaboration with Bob Brown and others produced *Wild Rivers*, which has gone through multiple printings and is still available. It stands as the definitive wilderness statement and is the finest example of Dombrovskis's contribution to public awareness. His photo of Rock Island became the quintessential poster of the Wild Rivers campaign, the symbol of an era.

During the 1980s Dombrovskis began to publish under the West Wind imprint and the *Wilderness Diaries* emerged. From the outset they have contained images of breathtaking intensity—a form of visual haiku. We must all have our favourites. I love the contrast between the Taoist contortions of old wood and the autumnal beech leaves in his photograph for May 1991. Then there are the views of panoramic grandeur: Cox Bight in the evening light; Mt Hayes partly dissolving into rising cloud. These images transcend the record of place and passing moment. They transport the soul!

Since their appearance, the diaries and calendars have been regular publishing events. They epitomize the meticulous imagery and design Dombrovskis demands from everything he does, even down to postage and packaging. To this day he has attended every printing job, irrespective of location, to oversee its quality.

By the 1980s he had clarified what he wanted to do and was confident and focused about what he wanted to photograph—'wild nature'. Seeing new landscapes was tremendously exciting to him. Trips to the Southern Ocean and tropical forests allowed him to introduce comparatively exotic images: palms from Hinchinbrook Island, King Billies from Mt Anne.

Trips to Borneo, Sabah and Sarawak provided dramatic contrasts to the temperate Tasmanian forests. He was fascinated by the giant insect and plant life to be found there.

I saw Dombrovskis recently as he ever so gently manoeuvred a freshly hatched dragon-fly across his hand. Here was no entomological curiosity, but rather an encounter between two lives, and Dombrovskis's response was full of reverence and wonder. This respect towards life is consistent—whether for an ancient pencil pine or this season's orchids. His spiritual dimension approaches pantheism: there is something mystical about his wider view of Tasmania's wild places. He speaks of a sense of presence, the presence of people who had for thousands of years lived from the land and sea. 'Just off the corner of Prion Beach, as you drop off the Ironbound Range, you can feel the presence of those people.'

His desire for integrated harmony in the landscape has been the main factor in determining his photographic style. References to the work of Brett Weston or Eliot Porter seem peripheral to Dombrovskis's style. He is impatient with the

technician's approach: 'I am not a technical person, rather someone who is absorbed with being there and who just happens to take photographs!' This self-effacing assessment is typical of his modest and unassuming nature. It underscores his consummate sense of organization and his professionalism.

His long-standing use of the Linhof, with its distinctive 5 x 4 inch format, provides the ideal visual field for his work. It encompasses so much and complements his own absorbing interaction with nature. The very small and the very large have an equal play in his responses—there is no hierarchy in the scheme of things—although his eye is highly selective. He has a prodigious capacity for arrangement, association and visual structure. However, he would deny any aesthetic theory or principles of composition. His judgements are intuitive, growing entirely from his sensitive response to detail and placement.

He does, however, have working guide-lines. Atmosphere and full colour saturation are usually essential features. In general, bright sun and harsh contrasts are avoided. Preferred conditions are those of low light and moist air where





colours and textures are revealed in their condensed intensity. When the mist hangs in the myrtle forest, when the mosses are all swollen and glowing, Dombrovskis will be selecting his moment.

At present he lives in Fern Tree, a beautiful mountain suburb of Hobart. It is an area of cool forest air and mists where regular snowfalls in winter add special charm; the scent of the bush and ringing native bird-calls all provide great potential for romantic gardening.

Dombrovskis and his first wife, Gabriel, have five children and lived at Fern Tree for ten years. In 1989 he remarried. He now lives there with his new wife, Liz, her two children and his eldest son. Gabriel, too, has remarried and, in true Tasmanian style, lives a mere stone's throw away. It is convenient for both families and although only Dombrovskis's eldest boy is a regular resident, the children harmoniously visit both homes.

Liz is a naturalist in her own right and an energetic gardener, contributing knowledge and creative insight to extensive landscaping projects. Dombrovskis and Liz probably don't count this as one of their outstanding skills, but recent stone constructions from Dombrovskis's enormous stockpile convey a natural touch which can only be achieved through a special blend of design knowledge and engineering nous.

There is no doubt that gardening is a great passion for the couple. It provides a privileged opportunity to observe and participate in intricate growth and change on a daily basis. It also allows them to project their vision in an environment of their own creation. Small wonder that so many visitors to the recent Open Garden Day found such charm in their little landscape. All Dombrovskis's past interests are condensed there: science, art, design and love of nature.

For some years now Dombrovskis has been planning and preparing a major publication about his home ground—Mt Wellington itself. Hobart is unique in Australia for no other capital city has a major mountain less than ten kilometres from the GPO. Mt Wellington provides a transition from sea-level through forest and fern glade to alpine summit rocks. Subsidiary peaks, deep valleys and pristine mountain streams are all within

easy walking distance for Hobart residents and visitors.

The book will cover much of the mountain's social history as well as its environmental value. Although it has always been Dombrovskis's intention to raise awareness of this wonderful natural asset, it is now a matter of some urgency that more people come to appreciate how fragile and vulnerable it is.

The Organ Pipes are the most prominent feature on the mountain, but they are threatened by a proposed cable-car. If cable-cars were to be allowed to cross them and penetrate the vast space of the valley below, the visual splendour of these spectacular cliffs would be grossly diminished. Extensive hotel developments on the summit with the resulting structures and associated facilities would cause massive degradation of this natural beauty spot. It is clear from the arguments of the economic rationalists that the tourism prospects envisaged for the project are based on values which have little or nothing to do with the unspoiled beauty of the mountain. As is the case with other contentious wilderness issues, the community holds opposing views—as was demonstrated in the Wild Rivers campaign, very few people have understood the true value and intrinsic qualities of the total environment. The *Wild Rivers* book played an important role in influencing public perception at that time. The forthcoming book will also be a vital factor in reaching a wider public which may not appreciate the visual pollution of a cable-car or the impact of commercial developments on the summit landscape.

Peter Dombrovskis is not a public person. His conservation views are shown without rhetoric in his visual publications. They have presented the case for wilderness in its purest form. No polemic, just the inarguable, undeniable record of what Tasmania has been endowed with by nature, but which it can so easily lose through 'development'.

This is certainly a very worthwhile undertaking and one would think that his immense contribution would be appreciated by everyone. But I shall always remember how at the time of the Wild Rivers debate a neighbour of mine, on hearing the name Dombrovskis, voiced the most surprising opinion. The person literally recoiled with disgust, calling Dombrovskis 'a devil, destroying our children's futures and job prospects'. In contrast, an American hiker, unaware at the time that he had hitched a ride with Dombrovskis himself, recently spoke to me with rapture about the incredible photographs he had seen in a display. They had confirmed and fixed in his mind the beauty he had experienced in the bush. Dombrovskis's capacity to reach a broad audience, from the uninitiated to experienced walkers, is one of the most effective means of assisting the wilderness cause.

With so many solo trips over decades, one would expect a host of anecdotes about memorable disasters or near misses in the treacherous waters of some swollen river. In fact, Dombrovskis's record is without trauma. While he has on several occasions encountered the tragic circumstances of others, he has never had a serious mishap himself. Once he capsized the Thunderush on the Franklin but swam safely ashore and, in his early days, he miscalculated some South-west scrub around Geeves Bluff, turning an anticipated afternoon sortie into a three-day epic. He modestly explains his successful solo record by way of planning and the mental rehearsal of what might go wrong and what action to take in those pre-visualized contingencies. His competence is partly due to bushcraft, but also to a sense of purpose and self-reliance passed on to him by the man who had embodied these qualities and had become a father figure to him, Olegas Truchanas.

It is significant that the worst experience Dombrovskis can recall was in circumstances where his self-reliance was of no help. He recalls with amusement how terrified he was being driven in Borneo. As the four-wheel-drive careered from one side of the road to the other, the sight of several burnt-out vehicles on the way brought peals of laughter from the driver, who just kept his foot to the floor. Dombrovskis believes that his own solo trips should not be so exciting! 'An exciting trip is dangerous and if it is dangerous then you are doing something wrong. Risks are inevitable but your guard should be up.'

What have been his most memorable moments over the years? It is not easy to extract that kind of assessment. You have to return to the photos to get the answer. It is remarkable that even when one knows a place so well, and has seen it in all weathers, it still appears to have been improved by this master's touch. He can distil more of the essence of a place into one image than many of us can perceive in an entire trip. The bottom line is that he is always looking for that bit extra. He puts in the time to achieve perfection. Once I was with him for three days of perfect weather when he did not even take out his camera. The air was too dry, the light too bright, and the flora was having a bad season.

As he says: 'When everything comes together you feel part of it all. You feel accepted by everything around you. There is a resonance with the whole of the day, and you become part of that resonance.'

A man and his camera, three lenses and a tripod; it doesn't sound like magic, but it is. ■

Peter Jackson is an art teacher in Hobart, where he has been an active rockclimber and photographer since 1967 when he moved there from Melbourne. He has contributed drawings and photographs to a variety of publications (including the *Wild Rivers* book) and has recently begun writing about the 'landscape experience' in the broadest sense.

Publications

Calendars

A photo calendar, Tasmania 1973-76
Tasmanian Wilderness Calendar 1977-84
Wilderness Calendar 1985-87
Tasmanian Wilderness Calendar 1988-

Diaries

Wilderness Diary 1983-

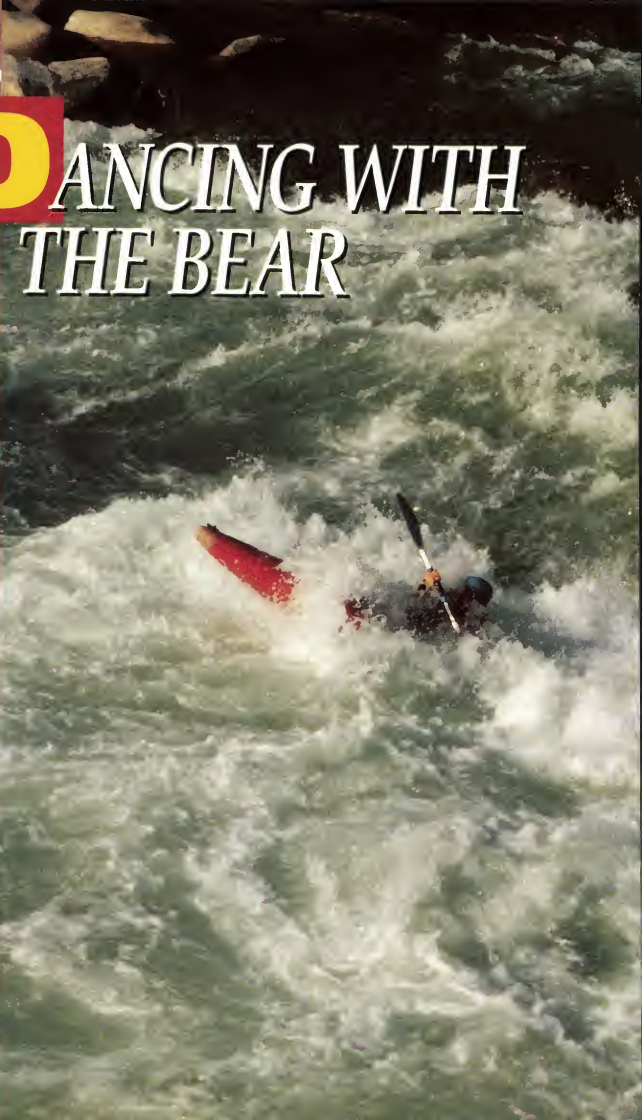
Books

The Quiet Land (1977)
Wild Rivers (1983)
West Wind Birthday Book (1986) ■



D

DANCING WITH THE BEAR



WILD CANOEING



'Cultural kayaking' in the former USSR, with Liam Guilar

I'd always wanted to go on an expedition. The genuine variety in which you take your kayaks to a place where they don't speak your language, where the local officials are truculent and hostile and where, after surmounting amazing political and logistic problems, you launch your kayaks on beautiful, demanding, white-water rivers which have never seen kayaks before; rivers with endless rapids and scenery that is mind-numbingly beautiful, dotted with villages peopled by inhabitants whose friendliness and generosity is the stuff of legend.

After more than 20 years of paddling, it was becoming obvious that I wasn't going to be invited on such an expedition. If I wanted to go, I would have to organize one myself. Through a bizarre series of coincidences I met Sasha Statiev and began planning to go to what used to be Soviet Central Asia. The planning took three years. There was an attempted coup in Moscow. The film crew wanted more time. So did some of the paddling crew. Americans dropped in and dropped out. A civil war closed down our first-choice river. Then the film crew dropped out; Sasha left for Canada; and the drought in Queensland and northern New South Wales put an end to local white-water paddling.

For three years I battered my head against a brick wall. I was told I was crazy; that it was impossible; that I couldn't or shouldn't go. I was given a hundred good reasons for staying home and watching the football. Like most people, I went looking for sponsors—and like most people, I got nowhere. The self-styled governing body of the sport in Queensland declared that they would not support me because they could 'see no benefit' to them. And then I struck it lucky: the people at the Russian Embassy were polite and helpful, and we finally got some sponsorship.

The final plan was fairly straightforward. We would travel to Moscow by plane, then to central Asia by train. We would first attempt the Chatkal River in Kirgizia and later the much harder Pskem in Uzbekistan.

One Saturday morning in August Mark Silburn and I, perhaps the unfittest half of a kayaking expedition ever to leave anywhere, stepped off the edge of the world and landed on our feet in Moscow.

In Moscow we got fit trying to keep up with our diminutive guide, who tore around the city on foot. In St Petersburg we learnt how to play 'Pretend to be Russians' so that we could get into places at rouble prices. This game was later refined to 'Pretend to be Estonians' so that we could travel in central Asia

without visas. Since Mark and I speak only Samurai Russian, and dress and look like foreigners, we were highly unsuccessful. I do not recommend this practice. After a bizarre week during which we managed to visit one of the world's largest art galleries and see no art, found the Museum of Our National Achievement devoted to selling expensive American cars, and saw the ship that

didn't come down to my knees and realized that the whole thing was obviously a game. The customs officials sauntered over, pulled back the blind, muttered, 'Funny-looking apples', and went round to the back of the truck, which was full of kayaks, rafting equipment and dusty, travel-weary Russians. Money changed hands, and we drove off into the night.



The people of the old Soviet Central Asia are uniformly generous and friendly. **Pages 54 and 55**, Trevor Robertson surrounded by hostile water on 'All-day Sucker', Chatkal River. **Inset (page 55)**, would you buy a used kayak from any of these people? (left to right: Liam Guilar, Trevor Robertson, Jackie Kiewa and Mark Silburn.) All photos Mark Silburn

has the gun that fired the shot that started the Revolution, we met up with Jackie Kiewa and Trevor Robertson and staggered through Moscow station with an indecent amount of baggage, which we stuffed into sleeping-compartments before heading south.

This was followed by three days in a train travelling across what used to be the Soviet Union.

Rafting was popular in the old USSR and that fact is a tribute to the resourcefulness of those who raft. All their equipment, from rafts to paddles to buoyancy aids, is home-made. We were to have five Russian paddlers with us—four in the large catamaran and one in the smaller catamaran with Blodwyn, our translator. She could speak four or five languages fluently but had never been down a river before.

After three days in the train we thought the normal part was beginning—after all, car shuttles are car shuttles are car shuttles. We were wrong. I can't speak for my companions, but I had never been 'smuggled' across a border before. With memories of *Midnight Express* vivid in my mind, I sat in the back of the truck-driver's cab hiding behind a curtain that

At five o'clock next morning, to a raucous chorus of 'We're all going on a summer holiday', we hauled up Black Camel Pass perched on our gear in the back of a four-wheel-drive. It was a grade-5 road, the route not obvious, the consequences of failure threateningly terminal. Monuments to those who hadn't made it dotted the hillside. Our driver made no concession to the road, screaming round bends and crashing up hills, throwing us about in the back of the truck. We ground and groaned our way up, got out to admire the view and check to see whether anything was broken, and then crashed and clattered our way down. Meeting yet another official we turned back, numbed and bruised, and finally arrived on the banks of the Sandalash River.

It took the Russians a whole day to build their boats while we played in the swift-flowing glacial stream, wondering whether we were the first kayakers to reach this place. The Sandalash is a challenging river, but we had arrived too late in the year to run it. At the end of the day the Russians produced the first of many bottles of what was probably pure alcohol and, having drunk to our arrival, disappeared. It would take us several days to introduce them to the mellow delights of sitting around the fire and getting drunk slowly.

Our journey down the Chatkal began on the following day as we bopped through fields of green waves to a flat

below Janke Bazaar. Here we waited while the Admiral (the head Russian rafter) went to obtain our permits from the ranger. While we waited, Blodwyn reappeared with the local children who came down to play, try on helmets, sit in boats, and eat the stones on the riverbank. Cute they were, but cuteness has a limited shelf-life when you're concerned about what children might do to the small, fiddly things that hold your foot-rest in place.

We left late, arrived at the Chatkal's first gorge and walked down the road to scout the first grade-6 rapid. Due to linguistic confusion, the Admiral insisted on calling scouting 'prevention'. What we didn't realize was that the Russians did their prevention from the start of a rapid or gorge. No sneaking down the eddies first. As some of the Chatkal's rapids are over two kilometres long, they spent a lot of time walking.

Mark and Trevor felt like quibbling about the grade of this first drop. It could obviously be run if you didn't mind a long and serious thrashing in the bottom hole. However, they agreed to portage, and we ran the rest of the swirling waters of the gorge in the still beauty of the sunset.

Day two was easy, with two stunningly beautiful gorges and continuous grade-2 rapids.

After this, the river picked up. The Russians number rapids from grade 3 upwards. There are 51 numbered rapids on the Chatkal. Few of them have names. We camped above 'The Thing You Strain Spaghetti Through After You've Cooked It', a long grade-5 rapid with a grade-3 sneak route through the rocks on the eddy line.

Mark christened one rapid 'Binary Proposition' because you either got it right or you didn't, and Jackie told us that the next rapid was 'okay, you just have to hop the eddies and switch from side to side'. We called this one 'Multiple Choice'. It was a horror rapid; the holes in the middle were monstrous and the opportunity for 'switching from side to side' was small to non-existent.

'All-day Sucker' was the longest of the hard rapids—so long that we actually gave it away and camped half-way down. 'It's only breaking waves', said Trevor, who'd got out to film it, 'go through the guts'. Following Jackie while the others filmed, I went far right, between the rocks; then, working left to 'go through the guts', I came through dripping and wondering where Jackie had gone. Looking up, I saw Trevor turn and lower the camera and Mark starting to move downstream and thought, 'oh hell', but immediately had to concentrate on the 'breaking waves', which looked to me suspiciously like stoppers and holes. In one of those bizarre moments you experience when suffering from oxygen deprivation and exhaustion in the middle of a rapid, I thought: 'This is just beach-break surf on a bad day.' Half-way down was a big eddy marked by a large rock on which the Admiral had stood to scout the rapid. I pulled in behind this rock breathless and worried, to see Jackie on the wrong side of the river shouting obscenities, but otherwise fine. Mark and Trevor then ran the rapid, conspicuously avoiding 'going through the guts' and, whooping out loud, began the wait for the Admiral and the cataraft.

I went to bed early. The following morning after breakfast I tried to

complete the rapid by running the sneak route down the eddy line. It was a silly idea. The sneak route pushed me into the main current and I had to do the only combat roll of the whole trip.

It was a good job that the roll is still bombproof. 'All-day Sucker' developed into fields of huge waves and holes that went on for ever. Blackadar boating (running the rapids sideways and only straightening out to skip round holes), I passed the point where the mind can't yeehaa! any more, and finally found an eddy and popped in for lunch.

As the trip progressed the rapids eased but got longer, as did our camp fires, and then, on the last day, as the evening set in and we found ourselves committed to the final canyon, we reached the ultimate bad place of every kayaker's nightmare.

The whole river funnelled down into a narrow gap between vertical rock walls, narrower than the length of a kayak. We knew it was coming, but the Admiral had told us that the 'Diaphragm' was harmless. What he hadn't known was that the river would be higher than he remembered, and that the approach was through a series of grade-3 to grade-4 rapids. I found myself hurtling down the river towards a breaking wave, crammed between two sheer-sided walls. *Stay calm*, said a voice. I hit the wave determined not to go sideways and was surfed into the wall and recycled in the eddy. *Lean into the rock*, said the voice. *Stay calm; stay upright. You have to get through this*. I tried again and found myself surfing backwards on the wave. Finally, I popped through, the Mountain Bat standing on her tail and dropping me into a whirlpool of sorts. *Stay upright*, said the voice—which was beginning to sound a little tense—as the paddle disappeared down the yawning hole. Mark had similar difficulties, but soon we were through and finished, and the party could begin. It ended about half past two the next morning when we had sung ourselves hoarse and drained the bottles of vodka dry.

In the morning, exhausted and nursing hangovers, we headed to the 'ski resort' of Bishmulla and a hotel complex in which Basil Fawlty would have felt at home. The restaurant—home to the most indifferent service in the universe ('wha'd'ya mean you want to eat here')—had highly original decorations: hoards of flies had been trained to die in surreal patterns on the fly-paper tacked round the walls. Not exactly appetizing.

Here we also experienced our first genuine banya. This is the Russian version of a sauna, in which one is baked, beaten and then frozen. It's the kind of thing on which you imagine people spend a lot of money in red-light districts the world over.

But civilization, volley-ball and the pit toilet couldn't hold us. The Pskem River, the harder of the two we would attempt, was waiting and, once we found a truck

Chatkal and Pskem Rivers



that worked and had petrol, we were off. Perched in the back, we set off along 'Horror-show Road' to the Pskem to another chorus of 'We're all going on a summer holiday'.

Unbelievably, the road into the Pskem was worse than the road into the Chatkal.

We arrived in the dark and humped our gear across the bridge, two silent men watching us. The river roared in our ears,

looked much worse than they really were. We ran some amazingly good rock-gardens, but spent a lot of time waiting for the rafts.

After our rest day, two of the Russian crew left to organize train tickets, so the undermanned cataraft needed volunteers for the more technical rapids. The cataraft has the advantage that it can be packed down to manageable bundles

be swept past, and began the long portage. Skidding and sliding on the crumbling rock, with a huge Russian rucksack, I remembered my students' words: 'But don't you have to be fit to do this?' Half-way down I realized that the gorge, after the initial drop, could certainly be run. I discovered over lunch that Mark and Trevor had come to the same conclusion.

We had been taking it in turns to be sick and this made a mockery of any fitness training we might have done. At this point I don't think I'd been able to eat properly for four or five days.

After successfully running the gorge we had another rest day. The Russians spent it building a banya. This is a complicated and long-drawn-out process which involves building a kiln of stones and heating it for hours, then making a tent from any available material. I don't think setting the hillside alight was supposed to be part of the process but it *was* an entertaining digression.

After the banya, and after checking to ensure that we were still red-lining our fun meters, we wandered up the road to a camp full of Rajneesh, followers of the Bagwhan. They were genuine space-cadets, and they danced around their fire like a coven of latter-day witches. But they welcomed us despite our scepticism, and one by one we joined in. It was very soothing: like a massage without the physical violence.

Our last day on the Pskem began well. I popped the second loop in Uzbekistan and Trevor had a silly swim, which made Jackie feel good because she hadn't had to roll, hadn't been eaten, and hadn't had to swim.

Before we left, Jackie, still paddling the guidebook, announced: 'It's all easy from now on, only grade 3s and 4s' and was greeted with laughter in which she joined when she realized what she'd said. We bopped on down to the finish although the river didn't let up. The Admiral, trying out Trevor's La Luge, swam the last three grade-3 drops. I still don't know the Russian for 'swim, you silly bugger, swim' but finally got it through to him that you can't climb on an upturned kayak and paddle it like an upturned raft.

And so the Pskem River was over. We left it still running wild, before it dies in the approach to Charvak Lake. As I carried one more huge Russian rucksack up the hill to our last, idyllic campsite I had a brief moment of euphoria. It had taken three years but I had successfully negotiated two wild rivers in central Asia. We'd done something to be proud of. Then the euphoria gave way to the mundane task of packing all the gear away. ■

Liam Gullar started kayaking in 1971. After paddling white water in the UK, the European Alps and North America, he came to Australia six years ago. His life's ambition was to have at least one article published in Wild. This is his second.



'It didn't take us long to realize that the Pskem is a kayaker's river.' Liam Gullar up to his neck in Uzbekistan.

and the sudden change of pace led to a collective failure of nerve. We had already decided—or, rather, it had been decided for us—that we would only do the lower half of the river. The upper Pskem has three kilometres of grade 6—a long way to carry a cataraft and kitchen equipment. Mark and I were for doing the whole thing, but we were outvoted and on holiday. Since the first rapid was supposed to be one and a half kilometres of grade 5, it sounded like there'd be plenty of rapids. As Mark says, 'you shouldn't paddle the guidebook, you should always paddle the river'.

The following day, while the wind trashed the campsite, we swapped stories, Blodwyn translating *Worst Journey in the World* to our Russian friends. They produced another bottle or two of vodka and late that night we found ourselves singing around the fire and trying to convince ourselves that we were going to do some serious paddling the next day.

It didn't take us long to realize that the Pskem is a kayaker's river. Big rocks, long technical rapids, an eddy-hopper's wet dream, and much more familiar to us than the Chatkal. In high water, judging by the undercut banks and the height of the flood debris, it would be a nightmare river. Now it was low, and the rapids

and thus easily transported on trains and planes and packed into rivers in wilderness areas without road access. Its disadvantages are that it takes ages to put together and break down, and that it has the eddying ability of a lump of driftwood. Mark and I found ourselves in the bow seats—locked in and hurtling towards rocks, buried in holes after dropping into them from a great height, and generally having as much fun as it is possible to have on a grade-4 rapid in an oil-tanker with steering difficulties.

To celebrate his return to his Mountain Bat, Mark popped what may be the first loop in Uzbekistan.

Not to be outdone, the Russians ran the little blue catamaran through an awesome hole we had all decided to portage. Although they didn't quite get themselves airborne, they managed a very commendable reverse loop. When we fished them out, a dripping Sasha confessed that it was his 47th birthday. Party time!

Immediately below this unnamed and unacknowledged hole we came to a gorge which began with a genuine grade-6 rapid. This time nobody quibbled about the grading. There are not many places where you can see that your death is a possibility no matter what line you take. We paddled down to the big eddy above the drop, suffering minor heart failure when the undermanned cataraft looked as though it was going to

T

HE FORESTS OF EAST GIPPSLAND

What's at stake in Victoria's far east, by *Jill Redwood*



The Australian continent is one of only 12 mega-diverse countries in the world. Since Australia became separated from the super-continent of Gondwana about 65 million years ago, a very distinctive and rich variety of species has been evolving which now fills every ecological niche. Over the last two million years Australia has undergone 19 ice ages, the last ending about 10 000 years ago. This has resulted in ecosystems and species which have been constantly changing and adapting. However, there are some which have endured the influences of time and retain their original Gondwanic forms.¹

Small, sheltered pockets of south-eastern Australia are believed to have been refuges for our present-day eucalypt and rain-forest species during the last ice age. From these 'hubs', plant communities spread and modified to suit various environments. This corner of the country is now the most diverse region for eucalypts in Australia. Such a diversity of temperate forest is significant not only for Australia but also globally.

The far-eastern tip of Victoria, known as East Gippsland, is an extremely important stronghold of this diversity and of the remaining old-growth forests which are now the subject of so much contention. In the past 10 000 years, eucalypts have evolved into over 550 distinct species. In East Gippsland alone there are 43 types of eucalypt—from the tallest flowering plant in the world, the mountain ash, to the stunted and twisted snow gums of the highlands.¹

The varied soil, climate and altitude of East Gippsland have given rise to a tremendous variety of forest types. In fact, East Gippsland has been termed a veritable 'living museum' of the Australian environment. It is part of the great eucalypt province of the world. The national and international significance of the region has been acknowledged by many scientists but although it is regarded as Australia's most important area for World Heritage nomination not already so identified, the Federal Government has so far refused to nominate East Gippsland for listing by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

East Gippsland's land systems range from coastal to alpine. Broad coastal plains with extensive dune systems and sandy beaches are interspersed with rocky headlands and coastal cliffs. Inland are the undulating foothills of dry sclerophyll forests containing the region's highest diversity of eucalypt species and native fauna. The dry rain-shadow country of the upper Snowy River seems to wear the features of a worn and ancient land; its mountains are rocky, craggy and deeply dissected. The native callitris pine woodlands which cling to the rugged slopes are believed to be remnants from a time when more

open vegetation took over from rain forests between three and six million years ago. Just to the east of this rain-shadow country is the elevated tableland of the Errinundra Plateau with its towering eucalypts and lush rain forests.

This area supports another native pine which dates back to the ancient forests of Gondwana—the podocarp, or mountain plum pine, which has survived millions of years of climatic changes. Many of these trees are between 500 and 1000 years old. They are also the longest-living undisturbed plant community in Victoria. These podocarp rain-forest thickets are a priceless 'antique' of south-east Australia, occurring nowhere else in the world. In one small corner of the Errinundra Plateau, these rich rain forests extend along creeks and gullies, enclosed by wet sclerophyll forests. Age-old eucalypts tower over a luxuriant understorey of tree ferns, conical sassafras, pomaderis, mountain pepper and a diverse range of wonderful cushion-like mosses.

As drainage on the plateau is shallow and slow-moving, wetlands and swamps were formed which now constitute important 'libraries' of pollen records. Study of this fossil pollen allows us to chart changes in the region's ecosystem

and climate over many thousands of years.²

East Gippsland may appear to be an inconsequential tip of Victoria, yet it supports over 300 rare and threatened species.³ Some of these endangered species have barely a toe-hold in the remaining intact areas. The tiger quoll, powerful owl, uan, and Victoria's most endangered mammal, the long-footed potaroo, all take refuge in the primeval forests of East Gippsland.

The tiger quoll is the largest mainland carnivorous marsupial. It was once so widespread and common that South Gippsland farmers remember tiger quolls running along post-and-rail fences in the evening. They are now extinct in that region.⁴ Only 30 individuals have been identified in East Gippsland during the last three decades. Despite their official status as endangered and in decline, they are given the barest of token protection. Pending more research being carried out regarding their requirements, the State's conservation agency, the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCNR), is unwilling to offer them full protection; until this is done their numbers will decline further, causing research to become more difficult. This sad paradox is typical of the State's approach to

Australia's forests and woodlands

- Logged, burnt, grazed, mined and generally degraded
- Protected forest (less than 1%)
- Undisturbed forest (less than 1%)
- Undisturbed protected forest (0.3%)



- About half of Australia's forests have been cleared
- Five per cent of Australia is now covered in forest (3% of Australia is now covered in eucalypt forest)
- Regrowth covers 60% of this forested area
- 0.6% of Australia is covered in undisturbed forest
- 0.3% of Australia is covered in protected forest

REMAINING FOREST

From: RAC Forest & Timber Inquiry Final Report, 1992.

Conservation of Forested & Wooded Vegetation Types in Nature Conservation Reserves in Australia, R Thackway, 1990.



Take one old-growth forest, cut down almost all the trees, incinerate what's left—and this is what you get: 'Regrowth' forest, East Gippsland. **Page 59**, old giants of the forest, Goonmirk Rocks, Errinundra Plateau, East Gippsland. **Page 62**, the cascading waters of First Creek Falls, Errinundra Plateau. *Paul Sinclair*

conservation, in which the commitment to supply wood-chips for Japan appears stronger than that to conserve Australian endangered species.

The Errinundra Plateau has attracted considerable public attention over the last decade. Having the second-highest rainfall in the State enables a multitude of tall, wet eucalypt and rain-forest communities to thrive. This is one of the best and most extensive examples of forested plateau land types in Victoria but it is currently being eaten into by road building and clear-fell logging. Unfortunately, the qualities that give the area such a high conservation value also make it the perfect prospect for the timber industry.

Pollen records show that there has been greater disturbance to certain vegetation types on the Errinundra Plateau in the last 25 years than since the last ice age,² a period which coincides with the beginning of clear-felling and wood-chipping 25 years ago.

Only small remnants now exist of the once great southern forests. The timber industry appears to be hell-bent on

flattening these relics. Conservationists are equally determined to protect them.

If we look at East Gippsland through parochial eyes we see that the region is covered with trees. However, if we convert this picture into one that encompasses the whole of Australia, it shows that only a meagre three per cent of the land is covered with eucalypt forest and of this, only one-fifth remains in its original condition. What's more, of this skerrick of ancient forest only half is protected—the remainder is available for clear-felling.³ Despite this, the timber industry claims that too much public forest is 'locked up' in National Parks. It explains that it only takes a small slice of the cake each year and then puts it all back, yet the small slice it takes is the same precious piece that has so far escaped the ravages of the axe and chain-saw, graziers, the match and mining companies. As for its claim to be 'putting it all back': 12 000 years of uninterrupted evolution are hardly going to be re-created in a logging cycle of 60 years.

Despite scientific condemnation and public outcry, the State and Federal Governments continue to pawn off the last patches of unprotected old-growth forest in a mammoth clearance sale. During the last logging season, East Gippsland was in the limelight again as 13 football fields of forest a day were

levelled, primarily to supply Japanese paper factories with cheap wood-chips.⁶

The mountainous nature of the region and its distance from any major city restricted the exploitation of East Gippsland for many decades. The early timber-cutters worked close to the coastal roads and railways, selectively felling what they needed. It was only after the 1939 bushfires and the post-war boom in housing construction that the timber industry set its sights on the lush, primitive forests of East Gippsland. It began infiltrating the relatively untracked mountains in the 1960s.

Clear-felling soon became the unquestioned method of timber extraction which persists today. With this system of logging, almost every tree is cut down from an area which can be as large as 120 hectares. The sparse scattering of seed or habitat trees left on the site is burnt during the napalm-ignited 'regeneration burn' afterwards. These fires are purposely intense, comparable to the worst of last summer's New South Wales bushfires. Thus the complexities and richness of a living forest are transformed into a 'responsibly managed' incinerated wasteland.

Once the State forest agency firmly established clear-felling as the sole method of timber harvesting, the other partner in this operation—wood-chipping—soon followed. The waste which



was created by clear-fell logging needed 'mopping up'. By this time a Japanese company had stationed itself across the border at Eden in New South Wales and begun its exploitation of the forests of south-east Australia. Its offer to clean up East Gippsland's 'waste' was accepted by the Victorian Government. This cosy, symbiotic relationship has persisted to this day.

Despite chronic problems with the regeneration of East Gippsland's high-altitude forests, the practice of clear-felling is doggedly adhered to. Wood-chipping and clear-felling are deeply entrenched, and each is now totally dependent on the other. The dynamics of this duo are intriguing. The wood-chip industry is fattened by very

powerful multinationals which control the timber industry in East Gippsland. The timber industry in turn dictates its demands to the DCNR, which oversees forest management for both conservation and timber production. This results in conservation concerns not only taking a back seat but being shoved unceremoniously into the boot.

Another three to five years⁸ of this forest pillaging is likely to transform the remaining unprotected old-growth forest and unique native communities into a sea of bracken and wattle. From the top of the food-chain to the soil microbes, logging causes major structural damage to the delicate ecological associations and intricacies of these primeval forests. Trees may eventually be coaxed to return,

but such an extraordinary and finely tuned system could take centuries to recover, if it ever does.

A dictionary definition of 'economy' is 'thrifty management, frugality in the expenditure or consumption of money or materials'. This is the direct opposite of what is happening in East Gippsland.

From the DCNR's own documents, it is calculated that only 15 to 20 per cent of trees felled in old-growth forests end up as sawn timber.⁹ Depending on the market, the remainder is either wood-chipped or left to be incinerated during the 'regeneration burns'. Even under a Freedom of Information request the department would not surrender its own figures. Taxpayers assist the destruction of East Gippsland's public forests to the tune of at least \$3.7 million annually⁹ yet are prohibited from obtaining important information on public-forest management. Old giants of the East Gippsland forest end up bound for Japan as wood-chips, with the Victorian public's financial assistance.

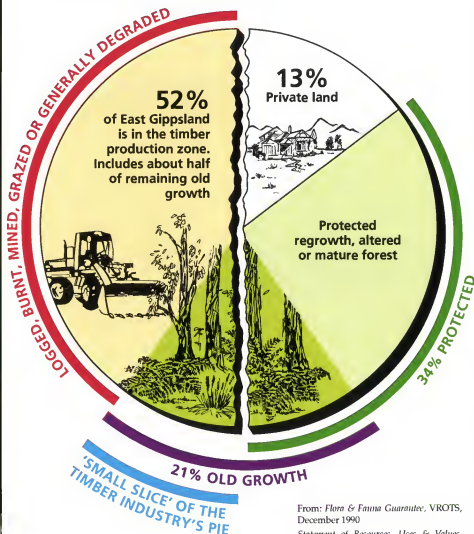
Forest groups began to campaign actively in the late 1970s. A proposal for a pulp mill in East Gippsland first came to light in 1979. For a decade its proponents tried to convince the public that East Gippsland's ancient forests were in need of a good clean-up. Vast stretches of our public forests would have been fed into the machinery of private profit if not for the efforts of local, State and national conservation groups. We must be thankful that this extraordinary programme never moved beyond Australian Paper Mills' and North Broken Hill's hard-sell, glossy-brochure stage.

Victoria's first forest blockade took place exactly ten years ago, in 1984. The protesters were a motley, multicoloured crew of hippies fresh from the Down to Earth Confest. Sarongs, headbands, love-beads and dreadlocks were their marks of distinction. Despite unconventional attire, their tenacity and conviction resulted in the Errinundra Saddle rain forest being included in the Errinundra National Park some four years later. DCNR information boards in this park proudly claim that such areas are now protected. However, just out of earshot, chain-saws continue to destroy the connecting sassafras rain forest beyond the park boundaries.¹⁰

During the summer of 1989-90, the East Gippsland forests again claimed the public's attention. The clearing of National Estate forests on Brown Mountain resulted in six weeks of actions with over 300 people arrested. They were charged with trespass for attempting to prevent the destruction of an international treasure. Apart from considerable media publicity and some costly political manoeuvring, it was back to business as usual for the industry the following year. East Gippsland's National Estate forests have since been

East Gippsland facts

- Covers 5% of Victoria's area
- Has 21% of Victoria's forest cover
- Supports over 300 rare and threatened species (seven times higher than State average) (38% of Victoria's endangered species)



From: Flora & Fauna Guarantee, VROTS, December 1990

Statement of Resources, Uses & Values, DCNR, 1993

A Study of the Old-growth Forests of East Gippsland, DCNR, March 1994

systematically destroyed from the heart out. The DCNR has publicly stated that it will continue to allow clear-felling of unprotected National Estate areas.¹¹

After 15 years of outcry to irresponsible governments, members of the public are now using more dangerous tactics. Locking on to bulldozers and perching high off the ground in tripods and tree platforms are desperate attempts to do what should be the government's job—protect forests.

Successful governments have instead attempted to placate and delude the conservation movement and general public with dangling carrots. The carrot of 'public consultation' is an example. Comment is sought from the community on copious volumes of government reports before final decisions are made. A

case in point is the Otways Forest Management Plan. Of about 450 submissions, almost 90 per cent were pro-conservation, yet the plan went ahead virtually unaltered and with a strong wood-chip component. These time- and resource-consuming processes seek to give legitimacy to what was intended to be shoved through anyway. Letters to government ministers receive scant, non-committal replies noting the complainants' concerns. Exposés in the media are shrugged off with placating smooth talk.

In the last logging season, members of the East Gippsland Forest Alliance took on the bulldozers and chain-saws. Huge tripods were erected over roadways to hold up logging traffic. Protesters perched on top of these structures awaiting arrest by police in cherry-pickers, but holding up operations for half a day to a week. Others locked themselves to the front ends of 'dozers. Teams of fit protesters darted in and out of working coupes closing down logging operations. Arboreal blockaders boldly perched 30 metres above the ground on boards secured to surrounding trees. The felling of trees in the vicinity of a cable 'web' would have been extremely dangerous for the sitters.

Police and government forest workers eventually broke up most of the blockades. The longest lasted for 11 weeks.

In 1987, the Victorian Government introduced its own version of 'resource security'. This was in response to the timber industry's assertion that more security was needed in order to invest in processes that would add value to the timber. The Kirner Government granted 15-year licences with a legislated commitment to supply 174 000 cubic metres of saw-logs a year. This figure is neither economically nor ecologically sustainable and already the volume is running short. The predicament we see today stems from a blend of an exploitative wood-chip industry and reckless government legislation.

Some examples of the DCNR's style of management:

- In recent years, only 21 per cent of clear-felled forests have begun to regenerate.¹² Despite evidence that clear-felling is not only destroying species and the balance of forest ecosystems but the forests themselves, the government firmly refuses to alter harvesting practices—a move which would reduce timber yields.

- The structure of forests which do regenerate changes into drier, more impoverished ridge-top ecologies.¹²

- DCNR research shows that only between 2 and 13 per cent of tree-ferns survive clear-fell logging (yet it is a criminal offence for a member of the public to remove a single tree-fern).¹²

- The use of heavy machinery has been shown to create severe problems with

soil compaction, water absorption, erosion through run-off and seedling survival. However, the results of this unpalatable DCNR study are being ignored.¹³

- The DCNR has concocted its own definition of rain forest which contradicts all other non-government ecological definitions. This enables the department to claim that it does not log rain forests.

- Plans are afoot to redefine biological Sites of Significance, thus enabling them to be clear-felled.^{6,14}

- So desperate is the DCNR's search for every stick of timber that National Estate, crucial wildlife corridors, Natural Features zones and potaroo zones are now calculated into the sustainable-yield figures for East Gippsland.¹⁵

- Old-growth forests are providing only one good saw-log to four and a half pulp-logs. Lower-yielding forests are supplying just one saw-log to 13 pulp-logs, yet the DCNR maintains that the industry is saw-log driven.⁶

- Mature forests are relied on to provide 95 per cent of the annual cut of timber.¹¹

- Forest managers are now proposing minimum-population targets for endangered species. Only 500 pairs of long-footed potaroos will be protected once identified—preferably in existing parks and reserves. This makes a mockery of the heavily publicized *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act*, which aims to ensure that species are able to 'survive and flourish in the wild'.¹⁶

- In Victoria, the timber industry has been propped up by between \$10 million and \$40 million a year.⁹ If the government made the industry pay its way, royalties would have to be increased by 55 per cent.¹⁷

- Despite DCNR policy, which states that rotation lengths for clear-felling should be between 80 and 120 years, forests which were knocked over as recently as 20 years ago have logging coupes planned in them already. For what else, besides wood-chips, is 20-year-old regeneration useful?¹⁸

- The 15-year licences, which were to encourage value-adding in the timber industry, have not resulted in one kiln-drier being installed in East Gippsland. Conversely, there has been a substantial investment in the region's wood-chip infrastructure.

- Downgrading of high-quality logs is rife, with trucks running after log-checking stations have closed and at night. Thus, quality saw-logs can be obtained at throw-away rates or as freebies. The DCNR system for log-checking is abysmally inadequate.¹⁹

- Government policy states that native forests are no longer to be cleared for plantation establishment, yet large areas of logged forest are being scalped, ripped and mounded, planted with the commercially desirable eucalypt species

A lexicon of logging euphemisms

Soothe your qualms away with these 'feel-good' gems!

- 'protected rain forests'—rain forests which do not contain saw-logs or stand in the way of road building.

- 'overmature'—forests which have followed their natural evolutionary path for millions of years.

- 'minimum viable population'—a new strategy which will allow the DCNR to decide how many individuals of an endangered species we can 'afford' to have.

- 'integrated harvesting'—clear-felling for wood-chips and a few saw-logs.

- 'modified harvesting'—clear-felling for wood-chips and a few saw-logs.

- 'rationalizing sites of biological significance'—clear-felling the most valuable habitat of rare plants and animals for wood-chips and a few saw-logs.

- 'public awareness'—publicly funded propaganda which aims to justify wood-chipping and clear-felling.

- 'regeneration burns'—incinerating the remaining life out of clear-felled coupes and oops...the adjoining forest.

- 'forest protection'—degrading forest ecosystems using broad-scale burning and later clear-felling.

- 'saw-log driven'—an industry which converts 7 to 15 per cent of a clear-felled forest into sawn timber.

- 'intensive management'—converting clear-felled native forests into plantations.

- 'sustainable yield'—squandering forests as if there were no tomorrow.

- 'public consultation'—calling for public comment after decisions have been made.

- 'timber stand improvement'—converting diverse forests into tree farms.

- 'regeneration'—plantation establishment.

- 'multiple-use forests'—public forests allocated to one sector of the community for private profit.

- 'environmental codes'—damage limitation (where possible).

and treated with pesticides and fertilizers. A plantation by any other name?²⁰

• The Code of Forest Practices sets vague environmental guide-lines for logging. It is consistently breached and breaches are frequently overlooked by DCNR forest managers.²¹

This is a mere smattering of the unaccountable practices of the DCNR. Such is the pattern of performance of a department which is responsible for both forest destruction and forest conservation. One could be forgiven for believing it to be the *modus operandi* of a desperately indebted Third World country.

The situation regarding the industry in East Gippsland is that the sawn-timber side of the show is slowly but surely going down the gurgler. Alternative building products such as steel roof trusses, concrete slabs and pine are now taking over traditional uses of hardwood. Victoria has over 200 000 hectares of plantations in the ground; much of it is ready to use now. The wood-chip industry is also on its way out. Overseas eucalypt plantations will result in our craggy old native trees being classified as low-grade rubbish. Not only do the

young plantations provide high quality wood-chips but they are also cheaper. Sitting back to watch the industry die a natural death would seem to be the easiest path for concerned people to take. Unfortunately, we don't have time to wait. The industry will take the best of our remaining treasures with it over the next few years.

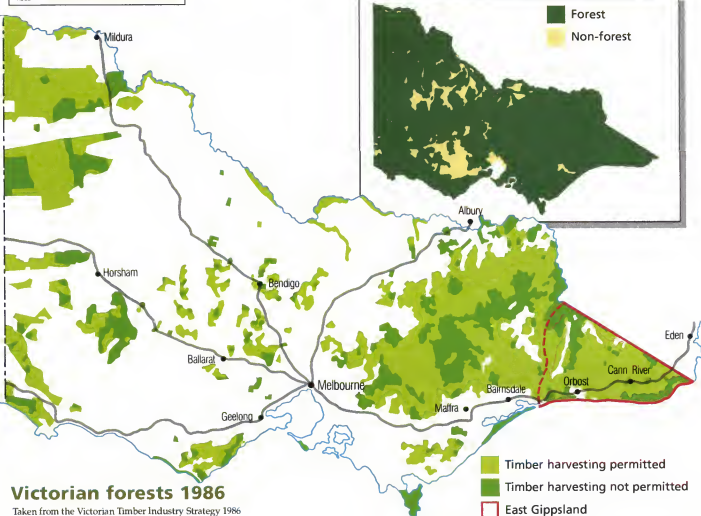
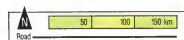
East Gippsland's forests are testimony to the tenacity and evolutionary prowess of nature yet the DCNR is allowing huge swathes to be crushed in order to reduce its annual obligation to the timber industry.

In years to come the world will view native-forest logging as we now view the exclusion of women from voting and the slaughtering of whales for pet food. The last of these ice-age relics in East Gippsland truly deserve to be worshipped—not wood-chipped! ■

Jill Redwood has lived in East Gippsland for 13 years and has been involved in the forest campaign for ten years. She co-ordinates the local environmental group and edits a newsletter on East Gippsland environmental issues. Jill's property on the Brodribb River is surrounded by mountains and forest. The constant procession of log trucks (up to 60 a day) past her front gate caused her to shelve plans to breed Cydessaes and grow walnuts. Jill now works fulltime campaigning to protect the last of East Gippsland's wild areas.

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Taken from the Victorian Timber Industry Strategy 1986

A solo walk round the Southern hemisphere's largest shield volcano, with Mark Worthington

Don't go up there', he said. 'There's mountain lions. The Americans let them go after the war.'

I searched his face for a smile. Nothing. Col Graham was serious. He'd lived most of his life in the Mt Warning area and knew the country well. 'I've heard roaring in the night', he continued. 'Half-eaten cows found in trees.' I began to have second thoughts.

My initial idea had been to be the first person to walk the Mt Warning caldera, a 200 kilometre journey round the crater's edge. Going solo had seemed appealing but now I had my doubts. I ran the stone over my pocket-knife one more time, for comfort.

On a postcard spring morning I left Tomewin in north-eastern New South Wales. From here the Queensland-New South Wales border rises from sea-level and follows the crater's peaks until the Border Ranges, five days away. A rough track leads through thick, subtropical rain forest towards Mt Cougal (694 metres), the grade steepening. Posts from the border fence stood at acute angles as I pushed on through the humidity.

Dusk settled as I reached the saddle between Mt Cougal's peaks. I rolled my sleeping gear on to a clear patch of ground and watched the day end. To the south were 14 days of mountains and mystery. Questions raced through my

Scrambling over ancient rhyolite lava flows near Jerusalem Mountain. **Opposite top**, even the hardest walkers need to take a bath! **Opposite bottom**, the view of Mt Warning from Tea-tree Look-out. All photos Mark Worthington



MT

WARNING

mind. Would there be water all the way? Is there a way on to the Sphinx? What about mountain lions? Night fell and the nocturnal world awoke.

The species' diversity in this region is, for a number of faunal groups, the highest in Australia. The area also contains a rich mixture of northern and southern floral species—a phenomenon known as the Macleay–McPherson overlap—many of them rare and endemic.

That night, the first of my trip, I was attacked. My torch beam swung round to light an angry bush rat. He bit my nose and burrowed down into my sleeping-bag to bite my feet. After continued assaults I realized I'd camped on his nest. I moved to a respectable distance and we both relaxed.

Next morning, I continued past Mt Cougal, giant spear lilies clinging to the western peak. I climbed among them searching for a way down. Balancing on one, clutching the sheer face, I looked for the next step. Two metres ahead, two metres above. Below, a 200 metre drop. I turned round.

This meant a tedious back-track and a traverse along the cliff-base—a safer alternative through tall stands of flooded gum to a welcome campsite by Mt Cougal Creek.

I began the ascent to Springbrook Plateau (960 metres) in the cool of the morning. The sun was late into the valley and I climbed out of the shadows on an old Jeep track. Built by the Americans during the Second World War as an escape route from coastal attack, the track is now regenerated with solid, wet eucalypt forest. The cracks of whip-birds sounded up the ridge.

I passed through Springbrook village unnoticed. Hot bitumen, open space. Relief, as I plunged back into warm, temperate rain forest for the descent to Natural Bridge. My first food drop



awaited so I gorged on all my remaining supplies.

Natural Bridge is a cave with a hole carved through the roof. A creek falls through the hole and flows out of the cave mouth, forming a bridge, or arch. Huge, buttressed trees and knotting vines smother the creek-bank. The cave may be a lava tube once connected to the main chamber of the ancient volcano 15 kilometres away.

'You'll want a pretty good map after Lamington', said Neil Hansel as we sat by the fire that evening. He had been the ranger at Lamington National Park before moving to Springbrook. 'It's the sort of country you could easily get lost in.' Next morning, before I left, he handed me a detailed booklet. 'Here, take this. You'll need it.'

Mid-morning I reached Bushrangers Cave. The overhang below Wagawn Bluff was a perfect vantage-point for highwaymen of the early 1900s. People travelling north from the Tweed valley over Numinbah Pass were easy prey. Before them, Aborigines used the dry ledges and permanent water as a campsite.

I topped up my water-bottles and entered Lamington National Park. Scrambling between boulders and brush-box, I ascended through dense understorey and finally out on to a track. Leaning against a rock, catching my breath, I noticed a rufous fantail flutter after a hapless moth. This region is home to one-quarter of Australia's bird species.

Cold air settled as the sun dropped below the tree-tops. I hurried along towards Mt Wanangara (1180 metres). Water was scarce in the higher reaches and was now a major priority. At sunset I camped on the cliff over Limpinwood, 1000 metres below.

Col Graham's words came back to me. Mountain lions. This was the place he'd mentioned. Sitting on the crater's edge I watched the last rays of colour leave Mt Warning and listened hard for growling sounds. Kookaburras laughed at me. I crawled into my tent.

Possums argued in the trees above and strange dreams haunted my sleep. Giant white tigers chased me through the night.

When I awoke, spears of sunlight were piercing the canopy above me. Mt Warning was ablaze with the first rays of light to touch the continent and, all around, the Tweed valley was deep in mist. Lyre-birds performed their repertoire in the dawn chorus. Their mimicry is so accurate that cedar-getters of the mid-1800s would run blindly from the sound of falling trees—that never hit the ground. Once, an old bush hermit played violin to his pet lyre-bird. Years after his death perfect tunes still rang out across the valleys.

I passed through a grove of Antarctic beech, their trunks carpeted with vivid green moss, an ancient scene found only

on the higher peaks in cool, temperate rain forest. The name derives from fossils of the same trees found in Antarctica.

I left the ancient grove and walked to Mt Bithongabel (1160 metres), a rocky knoll offering cool breezes and views to the mountains ahead. Clouds of mist clung to the Border Ranges further south.

The track turned into little more than a blazed route as I climbed Mt Worendo (1150 metres). I was making good progress when suddenly I froze. The shape of a tiger-skin focused in the broken shadows. Poised, tongue flicking, two steps ahead. Slowly I bent towards a stick. The snake lunged, striking my boot, then whipped itself away into the undergrowth before I could react. I felt sick. The reality of how isolated I was struck me. Cautiously I continued, eyes glued firmly to the ground.

The booklet given to me by Neil Hansel said Rat-a-tat Hut had good water. I made the side-trip and found a three-walled tin shelter, littered and adorned with bushwalkers' graffiti. Large flies and a smoky haze hung in the air. But the water was good.

I ambled through stunted trunks twisted by the wind. I climbed over large boulders worn smooth. Light drew me through the trees. I'd been under cover all day but now stepped out on to Kalinya Look-out in hazy afternoon sunshine. All around was an undulating blanket of tree-tops. Looking back over the ground I'd covered was reassuring. I was getting somewhere. Pulling my pack on, I looked ahead, then merged back into the scrub.

The fading light found me at Point Look-out (1080 metres) and I considered lighting a fire. Dozens of rock circles scarred the ground so I cheerfully lit my fuel stove instead.

Bernard O'Reilly came this way in 1937 when he tracked down the survivors of the Stinson air disaster. With 'a couple of potatoes and onions', he crossed the terrain on a hunch and found the wreck. When I dropped down to the creek the next morning I saw the rusting frame of the aircraft and toasted O'Reilly's bushmanship with a mug of sparkling water.

Where the border swings west the ground is level and more open. Dappled light covered the rocks and trunks, turning everything shades of pale green. This was the area where Hansel had said I could easily get lost. I moved south through subtropical rain forest and by late afternoon I needed a positive landmark. I scaled a ridge, where fish-bone ferns skirted the trunks, and found a blazed tree. Tweed trig point perhaps? I camped for the night.

Possums played in the breeze that blew strongly through the night and into the next morning. Trees arched as the wind clawed through the canopy.

A rough track took me across Gradys Falls and up through bangalow palms

and tree-ferns on to a wide forestry road. I stepped out, then stepped back. Too much space. Since Natural Bridge I'd had only a few metres of room around me. I waited, recovered myself and walked on.

While I was eating a meal at Brindle Creek, a car pulled up. A well-dressed man began to fill his water-container. 'Hello', he said. I tried to return the greeting but only managed a muffled grunt. I hadn't spoken a word for four days! Startled, he sped away.

Moonlight guided me to 'forest tops' campsite, where I collected my second food drop and slept.

At Black-butts Look-out, where New England black-butts reach their northernmost extent, I gazed out towards Mt Warning and the expanse of the South Pacific beyond.

'We now saw the breakers...their situation may be found by the peaked mountain which bears southwest by west from them and on their account I have named it Mt Warning.' Lt J Cook RN, 16 May 1770.

To Cook it was a landmark. To the Bundjalung people it was Wollumbin, the cloud maker. To me it was a constant companion, always to my left.

As I neared camp at Bar Mountain (1130 metres) I heard strange noises approaching from behind me. I hid between some bushes and watched an angry dingo trot past, growling and cursing to itself. I paused, and walked on



as low cloud drifted in and light rain began to fall.

Cold mist shrouded the trees as I set off next morning. Mt Cougal was eclipsed by Mt Warning. I'd made half-way.

Hard roads, a full pack and all downhill. I dropped 1000 metres off the Tweed Range, passed Lillian Rock and limped to the base of Mt Burrell (933 metres) with a badly swollen knee. Dreading tomorrow's 800 metre climb I wondered: 'Why am I doing this? Some sort of perverted torture?'

The next morning my knee had improved. I bandaged it and entered Nightcap National Park. I walked up along a ridge, then joined an overgrown 'sniggling trail' once used by timber-getters to haul logs with bullocks. Pushing through tree-falls I broke into a clear gully alive with birds.

From Mt Burrell trig, a rotting post supported by stones, I could see the Sphinx down a razorback ridge. Thick vines, armed with thorns and twisted into nooses, slowed my progress. An old python looked on in wonder. Inching along the rocky tightrope I reached the Egyptian-styled rock-formation.

A wallaby track skirted the northern cliff-base. I rounded a bluff, the head section, and stopped for lunch. Instantly I was overrun with thousands of tiny,

black ants. I hurried along through more vines and black-butts, singing out loud, all the way to Mt Matheson (803 metres).

The following morning I walked round the Terania Creek basin, scene of conservation protests in 1979. The victory by conservationists led to a National Park and later to World Heritage Listing. Most of the crater is now World Heritage except the Queensland sections, a legacy of the Bjelke-Petersen Government. In the valley grow 1500-year-old brush-boxes while tiny, rare frogs, their pouches full of young, hide in the foliage.

Black clouds gathered in the distance. The wind eased. I paced to a large, hollow black-butt and crawled inside with my last food parcel. Heavy drops began to fall. Mailmen used this tree as a camp on three-day horseback journeys from the Richmond to the Tweed. Four metres in diameter, it proved to be a perfect shelter from the storm.

Dawn broke clear as I pushed through flowering heath toward Jerusalem Mountain (810 metres). I passed impressive rhyolite cliffs and thick calicoma, then dropped down the other side on to a plateau and shoulder-deep debris. I balanced along fallen logs and occasionally crashed through the platform into darkness.

A wall of thorny lawyer vine stopped me on the valley floor. No choice but to burrow through on all fours. Hours later I escaped into a gully and daylight. I followed it down, walking upright, searching for a way on to the far ridge.

A side-creek led to an amphitheatre and waterfall. Should I tackle a ten metre rock-face or struggle with more lawyer

vine? I walked across a submerged log to the falls and began to climb. My heart raced as I inched up the face. Loose rocks came away. My pack threatened to overbalance me. I grabbed a small tree and hoisted myself up over the ledge. Exhausted, I unbuckled my pack and collapsed.

The Burringbar Range has eroded severely and supports drier eucalypt



Cool walking among the lush subtropical rain forest that grows in the rich basalt soils typical of this once volcanic region.

forests. Grass-trees and burrawangs line the route to Mt Chowan (521 metres), flushed in green after recent fires. Water was non-existent and I had only half a litre left.

A car pulled up as I rested by the roadside. A man offered me water and a lesson in gum-leaf blowing. He was returning from the Australian championships where he'd finished third. I gladly accepted both.

Darkness fell as I crossed the Condong Range. I put in another ten kilometres into the night as I blew merrily on my gum leaf.

I awoke on my final morning to find my tent surrounded by hundreds of beehives, sharing with me the only flat ground in sight. A low drone began to fill the air as I quickly packed my gear. I put on my cleanest clothes, drank the last of my water and set off through the cane-fields for civilization and home. ■

Mark Worthington is a photo-journalist who lives near Byron Bay, New South Wales. He has worked as a ranger with the Queensland National Parks & Wildlife Service and has walked extensively throughout Australia, Asia and Europe. He strongly believes in the conservation of wilderness areas.



C

CLIMBING IN PARADISE

Thailand's perfect limestone, white beaches and sparkling seas are a seductive combination; by *Matt Darby*





Left, Tonsai Tower, Tonsai Bay, Phi Phi—just a tiny part of the kilometres of solid limestone cliffline that has become the off-season glamour crag for Australian and Northern hemisphere climbers. **Far left,** Olle Wehlin (Sweden) climbing among the extraordinary rock formations of Phra-Nang.

Matt Darby is a free-lance photographer who has travelled extensively. His enthusiasm for trekking and mountaineering has taken him to India, Nepal and New Zealand on many occasions. He has rockclimbed in the USA, Thailand and Australia, where he works as a flight attendant.

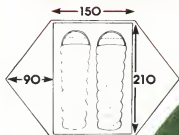






David Hall (Italy) takes a break from sunbathing to raise a sweat on Hang Ten (27), Andaman Beach, Phra-Nang. **Left**, two of Australia's finest rockclimbers, Glenn Tempest (top) and Malcolm 'HB' Matheson, soak up the exposure of Lord of the Thais (24), Thai Wan Wall. The last three years have seen Thailand become an increasingly popular destination for Australian climbers in search of 'the perfect climbing holiday'.

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THE KIMBERLEYS

An introduction to exploring the wilderness in the West,
by Laurence Knight

To most Australian bushwalkers the Kimberley region is like Africa. They've heard about it, but would only dream of going there. Once you get away from the tourist-infested regions you're generally on your own.

For those who don't know where it is, the Kimberley region is the rugged 'top end' of Western Australia. You could think of it as a tropical version of Victoria which is riddled with ranges, has bitumen roads only round its southern and eastern edges, and has the population of Dubbo.

The Kimberley region has some of the best bushwalking country in Australia and the Bungle Bungles—increasingly familiar as a back-drop to four-wheel-drive commercials—are the jewel in its crown. The area is home to interesting sandstone formations, tropical savannah, palm-filled gorges, deep ravines that wouldn't be out of place in the Blue Mountains, and imposing cliffs unsullied by climbers' chalk. If nothing else, it's a good place to get away from the winter blues in the southern States.

Because the land is rugged, the climate challenging, the remoteness intense and the scenery awesome, it's in some ways a pity more bushwalkers don't make the effort to get there. There are also times when you wish that there was a bushwalkers' guidebook to the Kimberleys so that you could discover what is there and where to go.

But when you find a delicate oasis and are able to camp in splendid isolation, you quickly change your mind. There aren't the tracks, the crowds, the fireplaces and the fields of toilet-paper that follow the publication of a guidebook. In any case, not knowing what you'll find is part of the challenge of exploring a wild area.

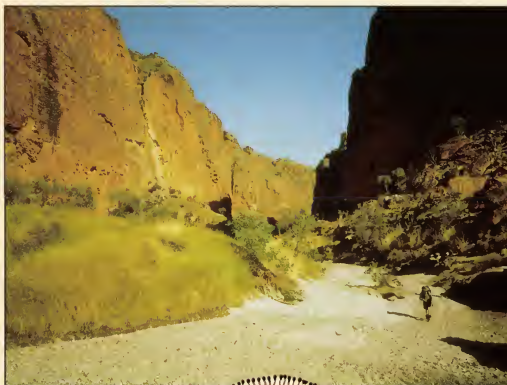
When to visit

Probably the best time to visit the Kimberleys is between May and September when the weather is easier to take. The scenery may be better during the 'green' (wet) season, but road access is much more difficult then and some areas are inaccessible. The Bungle Bungle National Park, for example, is closed from January to March.

Coping with the climate

Walking in the Kimberleys requires a different approach from that used in southern Australia. There isn't a summer and a winter. Rather, there is the 'wet', the 'dry' and the 'build-up'. The temperatures don't fall like they do in central Australia during the middle of the year. In the Kimberleys, it's either warm, hot, or very hot.

In September, for example, the average maximum temperature is in the mid- to high 30s. You would have to have rocks in your

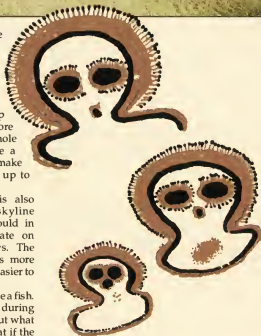


Walking in Piccaninny Gorge, the Bungle Bungles—one of the more popular attractions in the Kimberley region, Western Australia. Laurence Knight

head to walk in the midday sun (or without a wide-brimmed hat). The best way to enjoy the region is to be up at dawn and do the hard walking before it gets hot. If you are lucky, you can hole up in the shade of a cliff or beside a (crocodile-free) pool. Therm-a-Rests make good Li-Los, but remember to cover up to prevent sunburn.

The emphasis of the walking is also different. Instead of planning skyline traverses of the ranges (as you would in Tasmania), it is best to concentrate on escarpments, gorges and waterways. The scenery is more spectacular, there is more chance of finding shade and it is a lot easier to find water.

Since it's so hot, you need to drink like a fish. Unfortunately, water tends to be scarce during the 'dry', so you can't be too fussy about what you drink. Our rule of thumb was that if the water had fish swimming in it and didn't smell bad, it could be drunk without treatment. As a result, we wound up 'happily' drinking green water.



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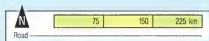
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The heat also affects what you eat; some foodstuffs go off very quickly. You can forget about most dairy and meat products, margarine, perishable fruit and vegetables, and chocolate (unless you like it runny). Powdered milk, cream cheese, salami, beef jerky, cucumbers, sprouts and oranges are some exceptions. Dried fruit and vegetables, nuts, cereals, biscuits (free of chocolate coatings) and peanut butter are all okay.

You don't need salt-replacing drinks as your body will adapt to the heat. Indeed, you should avoid using them if you are short of water as they can actually cause dehydration (as does alcohol). Look up a biology textbook on the subject of osmosis if you don't believe this.

Gear

You can leave a lot of gear at home. You will need a minimum of lightweight cold-weather gear and rarely use your sleeping-bag. You might want a lightweight one to slip your feet into if the pre-dawn air cools to below 20° (you do adapt to high temperatures). Generally, an inner sheet is all you will need.

If you go walking during the dry season, you can leave your rain gear behind (unless you want to use it as a pillow) and you won't need the tent-fly either. However, the mosquitoes and other insects are still there, so you should take either a mosquito-net or the tent-inner.

You will need to waterproof your pack if there is any likelihood of a 'compulsory swim' through a gorge (see Trix, this issue)—computerized cameras will not work after they have been immersed! If you can't waterproof your pack for a swim, you should place the camera gear in as many bags as possible, put it in the top of the pack and float the pack on your Therm-a-Rest.

Make sure that your footwear is in good condition as the going is often rocky (there is none of that nice, soft Tasmanian mud). Don't try to squeeze a final trip out of boots at their last gasp. In any case, unless you are good at repairing boots, it is worth carrying a light pair of spare shoes on long trips (you can always wear them around camp).

Maps

If you decide to do some exploring, a good approach would be to examine the topographic maps—many areas are only available in the 1:100 000 scale—looking for gorges within reasonable walking distance from a road (you may have to retreat if there is no water). Ideally, the gorges should drain a fair-sized watershed so that you can be confident of finding water. However, you must remember that the larger the river, the greater the likelihood of crocodiles. The Gibb River roads are a good area to start investigating.

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Mark Mathews in a Gramplains thunderstorm wearing an Aiking McMillan rucksack. Photo Glenn van der Knijff

WILD 115

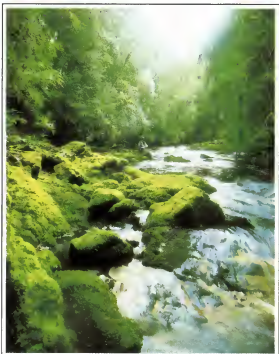
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TRACK NOTES

Access

Sorting out your food and gear, walking in extreme heat, and avoiding crocodiles are the easy bits. Actually getting into the Kimberleys is the hard bit. For starters, the Kimberley region is the furthest point of Australia from the south-eastern part of the continent where most of us live.

Once you get to the region, the major problems are limited public transport (there is no commercial system of bushwalkers' transport) and limited road access. In many instances the interesting areas are on pastoral leases. Legally, and as a matter of courtesy, you must get permission from the lessee to enter the property. If you can locate the lessee, permission is generally given.

Where access by road is possible, it is usually over a rough surface and may require a four-wheel-drive vehicle (as is the case for access to the Bungle Bungles). In itself, this isn't necessarily a bad thing as it keeps the numbers of visitors down. However, it does make things difficult for the interstate bushwalker.

If you want to be totally independent, you can drive your own four-wheel-drive (if you have one and have the time to do a round-Australia trip) or hire one in Broome or Kununurra (expensive). On the other hand, hitch-hiking is not really recommended given the extreme remoteness of many areas and the low traffic volumes.

Guided tours

There are guided tours to some attractions which will suit some people well and are better than nothing. Such tours would not be very attractive to most bushwalkers, but you may be able to come to an arrangement with the operator to be dropped off (and picked up) at a pre-arranged point.

Willis's Walkabouts runs guided bushwalks to a number of interesting areas in the region. These generally take two to four weeks. On the down side, you are not independent; but the trips are reasonable value for money.

Further information

There are several sources of information for the prospective visitor. The first is the Western Australian Department of Conservation & Land Management (which runs the National Parks & Wildlife Service). It has offices in Broome and Kununurra and has put out a book, *North West Bound*, which provides basic information on the National Parks in the region.

You could try to hunt down bushwalking clubs, but it may be that the Darwin Bushwalkers' Club is the only one you can find. Willis's Walkabouts has prepared a booklet on walking in the top end and you could get some ideas from its walks brochure.

Whichever way you get to the Kimberleys, it won't be cheap or easy. Nevertheless, there comes a time when you've seen enough of southern Australia and are looking for something different. The Kimberleys are not as far away as Africa; they are safer and going there will certainly help you better to understand the nature of Australia. ■

Laurence Knight is a policy analyst at the New South Wales Environment Protection Authority and has walked in every State and Territory of Australia as well as in Nepal and Canada.



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T

OURING SKIS

Slip-slidin' away; with Monica Perrymeant



Wouldn't it be easy if you could walk into your local specialist ski shop, ask for a pair of touring skis and walk out five minutes later with the perfect, all-round performer? You can if you know what to ask for!

Alas, there are many variables to consider and each one directly affects the others. You will need to consider the physical characteristics of the skis, the type of terrain in which they will be used and your own levels of skill, fitness and motivation. It is hoped that the following survey will help to put some of these things into perspective and help you to sieve through what can appear to be a plethora of gear out there.

The scope of this survey are skis suited to ski touring—from off-track day tripping to overnight touring in moderate terrain. Only skis with metal edges and patterned bases have been included. With the recent shake-up in the Australian market-place, you will notice that fewer brands and models are available this season. All the skis surveyed are expected to be readily available in specialist ski shops.

A good touring ski needs to be of a stronger construction than a track ski, particularly in Australia's harsh snow conditions. A little extra width will help with stability; a moderate degree of side-cut will make it easier to handle when turning; and metal edges will be handy on icy surfaces. Other factors which will affect performance include length, stiffness (flex), camber and the type of pattern on the ski's base.

Let's start with length. The old 'rule of thumb' indicates that a ski standing on its tail ought to reach your upstretched wrist (with an

appropriate adjustment for those who are tall for their weight and vice versa). Today's advice for touring skis is to select a ski five to ten centimetres shorter.

With modern construction methods, a skier's height and weight are not as relevant as they once were. Other factors such as camber, flex and side-cut must be taken into account when selecting the appropriate ski length. The exception is Fischer's Revolution Ski—a 147 centimetre ski, one size fits all.

There is also a broader range of lengths on offer today, particularly in the shorter end of the market, enabling children and smaller women to obtain quality equipment of the correct size. The Morotto Dolomiti Step, for example, is available in 170-210 centimetre lengths.

While some ski tourers will argue that a longer ski offers greater stability, others will insist that a shorter ski is more suitable when carrying a pack. Your ultimate choice may well depend upon your personality and skill level: a longer ski will generally be faster and more stable (great for hooning down hills) while a shorter ski may be slower and easier to turn.

All the skis in this survey are available in five centimetre increments unless otherwise stated.

Side-cut, or 'waisting', is a term you'll encounter when selecting your skis. All the skis surveyed have some degree of side-cut. This means that they are widest at the tip, narrow down at the waist (middle) and then widen towards the tail. It is the relative narrowness of the waist of the ski which

Perfect ski touring—spring on Victoria's Mt Bogong. Glenn van der Knijff

facilitates turning. When skiing downhill, weight applied to the ski results, one hopes, in the ski's edge forming a smooth arc which turns easily.

The more pronounced the side-cut, the easier it will be to turn the ski. However, before you rush out and buy a pair of skis with significant side-cut in the hope that you'll be gracefully Telemarking down Mt Bogong's steep and intimidating chutes, remember that skis of this nature will also want to turn when gliding on the flat!

For overnight touring it's probably best to select a model with a moderate amount of side-cut, thus maximizing both the turning and tracking potential of the skis. Also worth noting is that wider skis will offer greater stability and generally 'float' better in deep, ungroomed snow.

A ski's degree of stiffness or flex can also affect how easily it will turn. A softer ski is better able to form an arc while turning in deep, soft snow. However, at high speed on hardpack or ice, it is likely to 'chatter', or vibrate because of the difficulty of maintaining this arc and thus holding an edge. In an effort to overcome this 'chatter', Black Diamond has incorporated a rubber dampening into the construction of its Vector model.

In general, a ski with a stiff flex will be harder to ski on unless you are a strong, aggressive skier on steep, groomed slopes, while a medium ski is probably the best compromise for most touring conditions.

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Skis have either single or double camber. If you place a ski flat on a level surface without any weight on it, only the tip and tail will contact the surface. The arc thus formed in the middle of the ski is its camber. This camber collapses on to the snow when you apply weight to it. The stiffness of this camber will directly affect the ski's performance.

Let's look at single-cambered skis first. When you distribute your weight evenly over a single-cambered ski, it will flatten easily and evenly and should result in a smooth, carved turn. When striding, however, this means that the whole ski will be in contact with the snow and any patterned base may cause some drag.

A double-cambered ski has a stiff second camber or 'wax pocket' built into its middle. This pocket will only contact the snow when your weight is entirely over one ski. Thus, when both skis are weighted, they will glide on tip and tail only, resulting in a lesser degree of drag. But carving turns will not be as easy on a double-cambered ski because it will not flatten as smoothly and evenly.

Until recently, most touring skis were double-cambered. With a good range of single-cambered skis now on the market, these skis are becoming a popular alternative among tourers who are seeking the best possible compromise between performance on the flat, uphill and downhill.

The type of pattern on the base of a ski will affect how well it grips while striding and climbing uphill as well as the degree of drag it creates when gliding. The skis in this survey have either a positive or negative pattern.

A positive pattern protrudes beyond the base of the ski. These patterns generally resemble fish-scales or steps. Skis with a

positive pattern will usually provide good grip in all types of snow conditions. They will, however, cause some drag when gliding and can be quite noisy on icy surfaces. A positive pattern is also difficult to tune without removing some of the pattern and hence losing some degree of grip.

A negative pattern is recessed into the ski base, allowing it to glide freely and with minimal noise. The down side is that the degree of grip is reduced, particularly on icy surfaces. This can be adequately compensated for with good technique. One advantage of a negative pattern is that it can be tuned more easily with minimum effect on grip.

If selecting a single-cambered touring ski, be aware that a positive pattern will tend to cause even more drag than in a double-cambered ski. Also, the length of the pattern will affect the ski's gliding and gripping properties, with a short pattern gliding best at the expense of some grip.

Most skiers consider metal edges desirable when ski touring. While they make the ski stiffer and add some weight, they provide extra security and control on icy slopes. Metal edges will add overall strength to a ski as well as helping to protect its base.

All the skis in this survey have a steel or an aluminium edge along the entire length of the ski, or a shorter edge under the foot area. The Asnes Lillehammer has a three-quarter-length steel edge and Karhu's Kodiak Kinetic has a one-third-length segmented steel edge, both of which will lighten the load and soften the flex somewhat. The Black Diamond Vector has a full-length steel edge which is internally cracked in an effort to maintain flexibility without compromising on strength.

The overall weight of a pair of touring skis can be significant if you're the one pushing them through slush for hours on end. However, unless your technique is up to par, lighter skis may cause you to feel insecure when hurtling down a steep, ungroomed slope.

Better design and improving technology will gradually close the gap between the ultimate touring ski and what's actually on the racks at present. You simply cannot purchase a ski with leading performance in every criterion. The fastest gliding ski will have poor grip; the best turning ski will not track well; the strongest ski will be heavy; the lightest ski will be weaker, and so on.

Unless you have a specialist requirement, you will probably end up compromising with a touring ski that has medium length, side-cut, flex, weight and grip/glide characteristics. Either that or buy a different model for each potential application! In any case, be sure to obtain expert assistance from the staff at a specialist ski shop.

Don't forget to look after your skis once you've invested in them. All skis need waxing for better performance and to prevent oxidation of their bases. Your new pair of patterned base touring skis will need a tip and tail glide-wax job regularly. Have the edges sharpened and the tips buffed for best performance and don't forget to carry them in a suitable ski bag, especially when on the roof of a car. And, finally, don't skimp on boots and bindings—that's like driving a Mercedes without insurance! ■

Monica Perryman has been actively involved in a wide variety of outdoor pursuits for the last 15 years. She has succeeded in combining her love of adventure with her passion for travel and now runs her own business organizing exhibitions relating to the outdoor industry.

Wild Gear Survey Touring skis

	Lengths available, centimetres	Width at tip/waist/tail, millimetres	Flex/stiffness	Camber	Pattern type	Metal edges	Weight of 200 cm pair, grams	Construction	Intended use	Comments	Approx price, £
Annes Norway											
Lillehammer	180, 190-215	63/54/58	Stiff	Double	Quick-step, negative	Steel, full	1600	Wood core	D/T		386
Sondre Sol	180, 190-215	63/54/58	Medium	Stiff single/soft double	As above	Steel, full	2300	As above	T	Also available in waxable base	470
Nansen	180, 190-210	73/56/56	Soft	Single	As above	Steel, full	2600	As above	T	Also available in waxable base	589
Black Diamond Italy											
Vector	180, 190-210	63/54/58	Medium	Single	Scale, positive	Steel, full, internally cracked	2900	Wood core, internal top-sheet	T	Rubber dampening	429
Fischer Austria											
Country Crown	180-215	59/54/57	Medium	Double	Step, negative	No	1900	Wood core	D		275
Revolution Crown	147	48/46/47	Variable (depending upon weight)	Double	As above	Plastic, reinforced	1000 (147 cm pair)	Air core	D/T	Revolution Crown Lite available for people under 50 kilograms	275
E99 Crown	180, 190-215	65/55/50	Medium	Double	As above	Steel, full	2450	Wood core/air sandwich	T		499
Karhu Canada/Finland											
Falcon Kinetic	180, 190-215	53/50/52	Soft	Double	Kinetic (step), positive	No	1500	Foam sandwich	D		299
Kodiak Kinetic	180, 190-215	60/52/57	Soft	Double	As above	Steel, 1/3 segmented	2200	As above	D/T		369
XCD GT Kinetic	180, 190-215	62/54/59	Medium	Double	As above	Steel, full	2480	As above	T		419
Merlotto Italy											
Baccuscountry Touring 2000	180, 190-210	66/55/50	Medium	Double	Fish-scale, positive	Steel, full	2100	Wood core	T		389
Light Trekmark	185-210	65/52/50	Medium	Single	As above	Steel, full	2500	Wood laminate reinforced forelegless top-sheet	T		469
Dolomiti Step	170, 180, 190-210	71/58/55	Medium	Single	Fish-scale, negative	Steel, full	3100	Wood core, internal top-sheet	T		458
D Day touring T Touring											

COPPERHEAD

Sports Boots by Sorel



Sorel Copperhead Sports Boots now have a Sympatex comfort membrane. This is an extremely thin, yet absolutely waterproof liner which is incorporated into the design of the Sorel Copperhead Sports Boot. It effectively blocks out the cold and even after years of service the Sympatex of comfort membrane will keep out water and snow.

Step by step, the best boot money can buy

Sorel's new Copperhead Sports Boots are designed to take all the punishment you can hand out. They are lightweight and loaded with high performance features.

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- Padded leather collars
- Padded contour insoles
- Tough bottom with sure-grip outsole

- Fitted with Cambrelle liner. Keeps feet cooler in summer, warmer in winter. Breathes to let air in and keeps water out.

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Dandaloo Street, Narromine NSW 2821, Phone (068) 89 2222 Fax (068) 89 2233.

SKINS FOR SKIS

Going up without backsliding—a *Wild* survey

Skis must perform a few basic functions. They must attach to one's skis in a manner that is simple both to secure and to remove, and be effectively permanent while in use. They must provide consistent grip and a reasonable amount of glide on all the snow surfaces one might encounter, and they must perform these functions reliably for extended periods in all conditions or inconvenience, not to mention frustration, can result!

Adhesive skins attach to the tip (and for a more secure attachment also to the tail) and stick to the base of the ski using a durable glue. When new, all the adhesive skins surveyed functioned adequately. All were synthetic (as opposed to mohair), which is most appropriate for Australian snow conditions. For maximum stick and grip you should purchase skins that are as wide as you can fit on to your skis without covering the edges. The glue tends to lose its adhesive properties with time and may fail in certain conditions, particularly in wet spring snow and in extreme cold. Regular touching up with readhesive, appropriate care (keeping your skins clean and dry) and a secure attachment mechanism (see Trix, *Wild* no 42) will keep your skins sticking through years of use. When the glue has become too contaminated to stick, remove it—by placing grease-proof paper over the glue surface, ironing with a medium iron, and scraping off the glue (which will now be soft) with a metal base-scraper—and apply a new coating of glue.

Ascension kicker skins attach using a simple mechanical system which eliminates the need for glue. Their shorter length (they fit only under the central section of the ski) allows for excellent glide on touring skis, with acceptable grip.

Wild Equipment Survey Skins for Skis

	Width, millimetres	Skin type	Tail attachment	Approx. price, \$
Ascension USA	38	Kicker	na	139
	48	Adhesive	Y	172
Montane Switzerland	35	Adhesive	Optional	151
	50	Adhesive	Optional	160
Pomoca Switzerland	35	Adhesive	N	140
	50	Adhesive	Optional	168
Ramer USA	35	Adhesive	Optional	140
	50	Adhesive	Y	187
Voile USA	50	Snake skin	na	99

na: information not available

* Pomoca skins come with a tube of readhesive

optional tail attachment kits available at an additional cost



One mountain that even the best skins in the world won't help you to climb—a thunderhead towers over the New South Wales high country. Scott Needham. Right, the Extreme Jacket from Mont.



The Voile snake skins tension between the tip and tail of the ski and are held in place by two plastic straps. They are comparatively inexpensive and are completely reliable as there is no glue to fail. They grip reasonably well on most snow surfaces found in Australia (but not so well on the smooth, steep, packed powder ski tracks so common in colder climates) and allow poor but predictable glide.

An alternative to skins are the devices called hill-climbers, mechanical paddles that attach permanently to the top of one's skis; they seem to provide excellent grip (if doubled up on each ski) and glide, are reliable, and can be engaged and disengaged without removing one's skis. They cost \$64 a pair.

Stewart Spooner

CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR

Garments to go

One Planet's ever increasing range of water-proof garments now includes the *Expresso* and *Cappuccino*. Both garments are made from two- and three-layer Gore-Tex and are similar in appearance; both feature two large chest hand-warmer pockets, a draw-cord at the bottom to seal in warmth, and mesh lining.

The *Expresso* is a popover with a three-quarter-length zip while the *Cappuccino* has a full-length zip. RRP \$430 and \$450, respectively.

The *Extreme Jacket* from Mont is also made from two- and three-layer Gore-Tex and has a foldaway hood, two hand-warmer pockets, elasticized waist- and hem-cords and a mesh liner. RRP \$498.

Snake bite

Copperhead Sports Boots from Canadian boot manufacturer Sorel are a new range of boots featuring a leather upper and shock- and perspiration-absorbing insoles. The boots also utilize a thin Syntex membrane which, it is claimed, is absolutely waterproof, and each boot is Cambrelle lined. Copperhead Sports Boots are distributed in Australia by Kingtrend.

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LITE-TREK

Temperature Rating	-0°C
Outside Test Temperature*	-3°C
Inside Probe*	+24°C
Total Weight	1100 g
Filling and Weight	500 g Quallofil 7
Construction	Inner stitch free
Draught Tube and Tape Protector at Zip	✓
Water Repellent, Breathable, 40 Denier Nylon	✓
Stuff Compression Type	✓
Size Extended	19 x 40 cm
Size Compressed	19 x 30 cm
Price	\$109



TREK

Temperature Rating	-3°C
Outside Test Temperature*	-6°C
Inside Probe*	+27°C
Total Weight	1400 g
Filling and Weight	800 g Quallofil 7
Construction	Inner stitch free
Draught Tube and Tape Protector at Zip	✓
Water Repellent, Breathable, 40 Denier Nylon	✓
Stuff Compression Type	✓
Size Extended	23 x 40 cm
Size Compressed	23 x 30 cm
Price	\$129



SUPER TREK

Temperature Rating	-6°C
Outside Test Temperature*	-10°C
Inside Probe*	+27°C
Total Weight	1700 g
Filling and Weight	2 x 500 g Quallofil 7
Construction	Double wall
Draught Tube and Tape Protector at Zip	✓
Water Repellent, Breathable, 40 Denier Nylon	✓
Stuff Compression Type	✓
Size Extended	27 x 40 cm
Size Compressed	27 x 30 cm
Price	\$149

Introducing a new range of **ROMAN** sleeping bags to make all your dreams come true... a lightweight and warm sleeping bag in a compression bag.

This compression bag will dramatically reduce the size of the stored bag by an extra 30%.

Our new lightweight "Trek" range was tested in a freezing chamber at temperatures varying from -10°C to -3°C, with simulated wind factor of 40km p/hour.

The results ... **Perfect** (see above)
See them now at your local dealer.

ROMAN

*Temperature ratings are a guide only. They vary from person to person and are affected dramatically by weather conditions and types of shelter.



SLEEPING-BAGS

Cascade of sleeping-bags

Cascade Designs, best known for its *Therm-a-Rest* mattresses, now produces four adult (and two child-size) sleeping-bags under the name of *Therm-a-Nest*. The four adult models use Polarguard HV fill. Each bag comes in two sizes: regular and long. Prices range from \$295-\$495, depending on material used, method of construction, and size. In the child-size models, the *Meadow* features a Polartec 300 shell over a brushed cotton lining, while the *RidgeRunner* has a single, quilted layer of Polarguard HV. Both children's models feature an attached pillowcase, and a sleeve underneath designed to accept a *Therm-a-Rest* mattress. Both will sell for around \$140. Distributed in Australia by *Grant Minervini Agencies*.

Roman conquest

In Equipment, *Wild* no 50, we reviewed the *Trek* series of *Roman* sleeping-bags. We've now

learned that this range of bags has changed its style somewhat. While the names *Lite-Trek* (coolest bag), *Trek* and *Super Trek* (warmest bag) remain unaltered, the most obvious changes are that the bags are now tapered-rectangular (rather than rectangular), are ten centimetres wider at the shoulders, and have a contoured hood. If you're tall and have had trouble in the past finding a bag into which you fit comfortably, *Roman* has helped to rectify this situation by introducing an extra-long version of the bags. RRP \$109, \$129 and \$149, respectively.

MISCELLANEOUS

A good forecast

Have you ever wanted to calculate the height you've just gained while climbing a mountain, or wanted to know whether the barometric pressure was rising or falling so that you could anticipate the next day's weather, or just wanted to know the time or temperature? The *Outdoorsman* gives you all this and more. This

palm-sized weather instrument also has an alarm, shows the date, gives you your height above sea-level and shows the trends in barometric pressure over the past 24 hours. And, by using the information on barometric trends, an icon appears on the screen which indicates the weather forecast for an 8-12 hour period. This extremely light and user-friendly instrument is distributed by *Sphere Innovative Technologies* and sells for RRP \$299.95.



The Avocet Vertech, it would seem, will do everything except climb the mountain for you.

Avocet's new *Vertech* is a comprehensive wrist instrument similar to the *Outdoorsman*. It incorporates a watch and an altimeter which enables you to measure height above sea-level as well as height ascended or descended (on foot or ski) over a day, a week or a year. The *Vertech* also calculates your current, maximum and average rate of ascent or descent. Other features include a barometer showing current reading and barometric trend, a thermometer and a chronometer. RRP \$329. XCD skiers and gear freaks will no doubt find it hard to resist the temptation to check out these items even if they can't afford them.

Blade runner

The new *Snap-It C26 knife* by US company *Spyderco* has been designed to be opened with one hand even when you're wearing mittens or gloves. The two-and-a-half-inch blade is made from stainless steel, and the knife can be bought as a smooth-edge or a serrated-edge model. The name 'Snap-It' is derived from the way the knife attaches to other objects—a mechanism similar to a climber's karabiner can be used to attach the knife to rings, zippers, belt-loops, and the like. The handle also features a lanyard hole so that the knife can be threaded on a string. The knife weighs about 60 grams and the blade appears to be very sharp. The *Snap-It* sells for around \$95 and is distributed in Australia by *Zen Imports*.

Primed for action

Swedish manufacturer *Primus* has recently released a new range of lightweight gas stoves for outdoor use. The *Action Sports* range includes a stove similar in appearance to one of NASA's 'lunar landing modules'. The gas canister and heater unit are separate, and the stove is ignited automatically by a built-in lighter; no matches are required. The range

TRIX

Keeping your gear dry

Simple tricks for greater comfort, by David Noble

Sales assistants in gear shops often mention that one of the main requests from people buying new packs is that the pack be waterproof. The fact is that no pack is waterproof. Even if the fabric from which the pack is made is waterproof, water will still leak in through stitching or through the top of the pack. The undesirability of a wet sleeping-bag is obvious—as is that of dehydrated food 'rehydrating' in a water-soaked pack.

Two problems may be encountered by bushwalkers: 1, keeping out driving rain while on a normal walk and, 2, keeping all your gear dry if you have to swim with a pack.

In light rain, you may find that your gear will stay dry if you don't bother with any special waterproofing. In heavy or driving rain, however, some of it will enter through stitching holes or through the throat of the pack. If the pack has a reinforced bottom, water often collects here and soaks your sleeping-bag. Swimming with a pack is more serious. Bushwalkers are frequently confronted with a flood-swollen river that may need to be crossed or be unable to proceed along one side of a river because of cliffs and find it necessary to swim round a bluff or over to the other side. Will your gear stay dry? Canyoners on weekend canyoning trips encounter the greatest problems—swimming with a pack is the norm and sometimes they may have to throw their pack down a drop and jump after it.

How do you overcome these problems? It is possible to purchase special heavy-duty pack liners. These are quite good at keeping rain out but can be difficult to seal up for complete pack immersion. One of the cheapest and easiest options is to line your pack with garbage bags. Good-quality bags, Glad Bags for example, which have a straight edge at the bottom are quite adequate to overcome both situations. Avoid brands that have a type of pleat fold at the bottom: there is a weak point at the joint. To line a large pack completely, a large garden-refuse type of bag is needed. (If you don't expect to swim but expect rain (as on a long Tassie walk), line your pack with one of these bags. A few

holes may develop but these will have minimal effect.

For trips on which you plan to swim with your pack, more precautions may be needed. For short swims, you can keep all or most water out of your pack if you swim with it on your back even if it has not been waterproofed. Some people prefer to take their pack off and push it along with them as they go—this can lead to water entering the pack through the throat. To waterproof a pack completely, use two large garbage bags—one inside the other to act as 'insurance'. Be very careful how you pack objects with sharp edges such as billies and cutlery. If you just swim with your pack on, it may not be necessary to tie up the top of the bags as long as you keep this area well away from the water-line while you swim. For complete immersion, as may happen on canyoning trips, how you seal up the bags is very important. It is not sufficient just to 'crunch up' the top of the bags and tie with a bit of string. It is vital to make sure that the bags have no air pockets and then twist the top of each bag and fold it back on itself. Then you can tie the bag or seal it with a strong rubber band. On a long trip it can be worth carrying some spare bags to replace bags that may get damaged (although insulation tape can be used to repair holes).

Cameras and other bits of gear you use a lot can be packed in their own, smaller bags at the top of the pack. On shorter trips, some bushwalkers may prefer to use special waterproof containers to store cameras, flippers, etc. Containers may be suitable for this, if carefully packed. I prefer the sturdiness afforded by metal ammunition boxes, available from disposal stores, for keeping camera gear dry while canyoning although these boxes are too heavy for overnight use.

Note: don't attempt to swim in really turbulent water. There are special techniques for crossing flooded rivers and in the main they don't involve a rope or swimming. ■

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send to the address at the end of this department.



patagonia

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MP/14

EQUIPMENT

also includes stoves which incorporate the heater unit and the gas canister as one item, a twin-burner cooker and cooker utensils. Further information on these stoves can be obtained from *Prica Leisure Products*, the Australian distributor. Phone (02) 644 6188.



The Strike-a-light fire-starter offers the chance of an instant, matchless camp fire.

Friendly fire

Further to the report in Equipment, *Wild* no 52, on fire-starters, we have now received information on *Strike-a-light*, a fire-starter from Australian manufacturer *DH Meehan*. It uses a flint of magnesium alloy that can be struck around 2000 times with the scraper-blade (provided) or a knife-blade. The Strike-a-light is available in two models; one with a handle (RRP \$15) and one for attachment to a belt (RRP \$12). Look for them at outdoor shops or contact the manufacturer on (03) 842 1554.

Foreigners in Australia

Patagonia is an American company that has been making clothing for bushwalkers, ski tourers, mountaineers, kayakers and other outdoor enthusiasts since the 1970s. More recently, it has developed for climbers (and NASA astronauts) *underwear* using Capilene, a fleece made from 80 per cent recycled plastic soft-drink bottles and 20 per cent polyester (developed in association with various mills). It has also, in partnership with Gore, produced a range of shells for outdoor clothing.

By the time you read this item, mail-order activities of *Patagonia Australia*, a wholly Australian-owned company, will have been launched. Retail operations are planned to begin in October.

Another new/old name in Australian outdoor shops is the *Great Outdoors*, the well-known New Zealand organization which now has a chain of shops ('Centres') in Australia. Independently owned, the shops are under licence to Sunshine Ellis and thus stock a good range of that company's products as well as *Great Outdoors* products. ■

New products (on loan to *Wild*) and/or information about them, including colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.



TO A ROSSI TREKKER, IT'S JUST ANOTHER BUMP IN THE ROAD.



The thought of attempting to conquer Cradle Mountain is enough to set any bushwalker quaking in their boots. Unless, of course, those boots are a pair of Rossi Trekkers.

That's because the Trekker is designed and manufactured in Australia, specifically for Australian bushwalking conditions.

Inside and out, the Rossi Trekker is an extremely hardwearing boot that combines highly innovative design with four generations

of boot making experience to offer you the very best in both comfort and quality.

The exterior of the boots feature full leather uppers, the main body of which is constructed from a single piece of leather. This means they are not only easy to waterproof, they're also easier to keep free from heavy mud deposits. Built-in padded ankle supports and cushions ensure that the Trekker is easy to wear, too.

The Trekker is fully lined with both leather and cambrelle, offering superior comfort and a snug fit, and the internal lining keeps your feet cool when it's hot, and warm when it's not.

The very popular resin rubber "Rossi Lite" sole features air

cushioning to absorb impact, from heel to ball joint, and

the moulded polyurethane midsole wedge gives you added comfort and support all day long. The superior tread design offers you a grip strong

enough to handle the toughest conditions.

Although heavy on features,

the Rossi Trekker is actually a very light boot, so you're not carrying

around any excess weight. And it's light on your pocket too, compared to many imported brands.

If you're after a bushwalking boot that can take the most hostile terrain in its stride, try a pair of Rossi Trekkers on for size.



Rossi Boots

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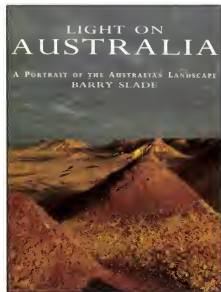
Extraordinary range of self-published works

BOOKS

Light on Australia

by Barry Slade (Angus & Robertson, 1993, RRP \$39.95).

A casual flick through Barry Slade's latest book is enough to see that this photographer has travelled far and wide. Not only does this coffee-table book contain shots from most of Australia's far reaches but the photographic angles of some shots, from locations with which I am familiar, imply that the photographer has expended some effort to obtain the pictures. The accompanying text has been well researched and its interpretative style provides much interesting material which further explains the photographs.



Many camera angles are interesting and some quite striking, but occasionally the pictures disappoint due to a lack of brilliance in the colours. This is a criticism of the printing and not of the photographer's technique.

The areas covered include such remote regions as the Kimberleys, the Hamersley Range, Uluru, Eungella National Park and a host of sites in New South Wales and Victoria. Strangely, there is no reference to Kakadu or South-west Tasmania.

The book has seven chapters, each pertaining to a different visual environment. The sections concerning arid lands, oases, the coast, forests and highlands relate solely to the natural environment but the two remaining chapters, on plains and rangelands, emphasize the settlement and grazing of these regions. I do not quite understand the logic in this delineation as there are human aspects to the five former regions as well—a quality omitted from these chapters.

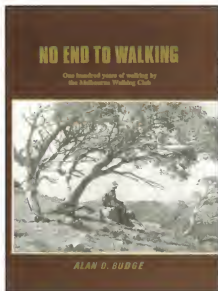
Nevertheless, the book provides an interesting and diverse collection of visual images of the continent. They are taken by a professional who understands the photographic process and clearly thinks in terms of composition and lighting. This professionalism shows in his work.

Robert Rankin

No End to Walking

by Alan Budge (published on behalf of the author, 1994, RRP \$15 plus \$5.00 postage from Alan Budge Book Account, PO Box 114, Mentone, Vic 3194).

Until his death from cancer in 1992, Budge was a prominent member of the Melbourne Walking Club. It had been arranged for him to produce a history of the club's activities to mark its centenary in 1994. However, as often happens in such cases, the club did not want to publish the history when the manuscript was completed. After Budge's death a group



of his friends, including Harry Stephenson, at some personal expense and following a legal copyright skirmish, arranged for private publication of the book, which is subtitled 'One hundred years of walking by the Melbourne Walking Club'. Part of the proceeds from the sales of the book are donated to cancer research.

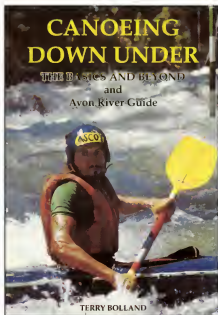
No End... is similar in style to other books produced by Stephenson, such as his well-known *Cattlemen and Huts of the High Plains*, published in 1980. The result is a rather folksy and anecdotal coverage of the early days of Victorian walking. There are 109 black-and-white photos, many of historical significance.

Chris Baxter

Canoeing Down Under—The Basics and Beyond and Avon River Guide

by Terry Bolland (published by the author, 1994, RRP \$39.95).

What an extraordinary book! How many canoeists world-wide have the knowledge to write authoritatively about everything from canoe polo in pools to sea kayaking in crocodile country?



It is impossible to describe the total coverage of Terry Bolland's 'Bible' in a 200-word review. In the first chapter we get a general run-down on canoes and kayaks; on pages 30 and 31 are photographs and descriptions of safety accessories; further on, we encounter basic skills for canoe- and kayak-paddlers; and by page 109 we have read about white-water skills and are beginning an excellent chapter on rescue, complete with detailed diagrams. A section on kayaking starts at page 138, incorporating, among other things, lessons in navigation and in how to avoid crocodiles.

At this stage Bolland sensibly hands the pen to a few champion paddlers who give an 'overview' of their area of competitive expertise.

In addition to the above, we are treated to personal anecdotes from the author's adventures; a list of Australian Champions in canoe sport from the 1960s on; the Australian Canoe Federation Instructor Awards are explained—if Bolland has missed something important, it's hard to imagine what it could be.

It seems almost impossible to review such an exhaustive work without finding some

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faults. A few more sequential photographs of technique would sometimes have been of benefit. The occasional shots of paddlers on moving water without a helmet are undesirable, but just two things are really worth criticizing. Considering that the author's major market will be in the eastern States, buyers will not appreciate the expense of a 56-page description of the Avon River Descent in Western Australia. The other criticism? The cover, I'm afraid, is truly awful.

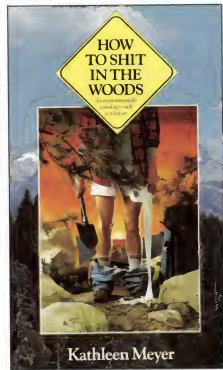
Unless a budding canoeist progresses to great things, this comprehensive book is probably the only one he or she will ever need. Experienced paddlers will still find plenty to interest them and may learn a thing or two as well.

Andrew Barnes

How to Shit in the Woods

by Kathleen Meyer (Ten Speed Press, 1989, RRP \$US9.95 [distributed in Australia by Specialist Publications]).

When nature calls, many bushwalkers are caught with their pants down. Fouling up in this area can be embarrassing, uncomfortable, unhygienic and polluting.



It is not a topic discussed frequently, still less written about, but as more and more people are venturing into our wild places, and as faecal-borne diseases like giardia are becoming increasingly prevalent even in remote areas, we could all do with a little back-country potty-training.

Kathleen Meyer's tome is no mere flash in the pan. She has considered the job from all angles, and the book has flushed out a good deal of sound advice. She cuts through the crap that good bush toileting is something we do by instinct, and maintains, rather, that it is something we have to learn.

And I must say that there were a good many ideas in this book to increase hygiene and

comfort which had never occurred to me. Ideas for how to cope in a blizzard, for example, or where there is no possibility of digging a hole.

There are some very aesthetic places to sit and ponder in the Australian bush. *How to Shit in the Woods*, though written from a US perspective, will help you to enjoy the experience.

Brian Walters

Overseas Work, Learning Holidays, Adventure Travel-For Australians & New Zealanders

edited by Bryan Havenhand & Joanna Maxwell (Global Exchange, 1994, RRP \$17.95).

If any of the subjects suggested by this book's title interest you, this information-packed publication of almost 300 pages is likely to be useful. But it is the adventure travel section that is likely to be of most value to *Wild* readers. Unfortunately, however, this section comprises only 38 pages—if you count some padding. It includes tips for adventure travellers, advice on choosing gear (by *Wild* correspondent Warren McLaren), and a summary of some of the commercial operators.

CB

Wilderness 1993 Red Index

(The Colong Foundation for Wilderness, 1993, RRP \$100 or \$5.00 for individual wilderness-area listings).

Australia's last remaining areas of wilderness are under threat. That there are only small pockets left amongst the carnage is the result of the onslaught of two centuries of white civilization.

The Colong Foundation's *Wilderness Red Index*, modelled on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's *Mammal Red Data Book*, documents threatened wilderness. The 1993 *Red Index* is a snapshot of the status of wilderness in New South Wales. Its 284 pages list 27 wilderness areas, and update the original 1991 index.

The index provides descriptions of size, land tenure details, land use details, a chronology of conservation measures and a list of threats for each wilderness area. These, in addition to a list of contacts, supply the eyes, the ears and the mouth that will help to save it.

The index is a vital reference for wilderness campaigners and ecology researchers. Information is accepted and incorporated into future *Red Indexes* and the newly released on-line Australia-wide version (see Green Pages, page 29).

Copies are obtainable from the Colong Foundation for Wilderness (02) 247 4714.

Louise de Beuzeville

POSTERS & CARDS

Grampians Posters and Cards

(Irene Read, 1993-94, posters RRP \$5.75 each, cards RRP \$1.00 each from shops in and around the Grampians and Mt Arapiles).

These posters and postcards include some of the most popular scenes in Victoria's picturesque Grampians Ranges: the Balconies, Mackenzie Falls, the Grand Canyon, Fyans Creek and Lake Bellfield, Beehive Falls and Redmans Bluff. There is also a picture of nearby Mt Arapiles. The photos are certainly very fine, but it says something about the management of the region that each of the first four pictures includes ugly man-made structures.

CB

MUSIC

Visions of Wilderness

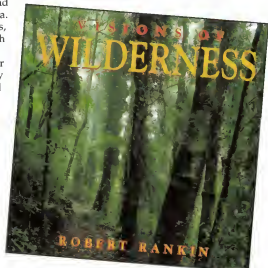
by Robert Rankin (Rankin Publishers, 1994, RRP \$24.95).

Robert Rankin has made a major contribution to the visual documentation of the Australian landscape with the publication of his diaries, calendars, posters and books. *Visions of Wilderness* is an attempt to move beyond the printed image into the music market.

This compact disc of 42 minutes' length contains six pieces of synthesized electronic music composed and mostly played by Robert Rankin. The sounds and mood of the oceans and rain forests, the desert and the mountains are reflected upon in 'New Age' style. The reproduction of waves rolling on top of one another in 'Ocean Sunrise' was very realistic. The thunderstorms breaking in 'Lamington Rainforests' followed by the birds announcing the sun brought a smile to my face as I recollected pleasant walks in similar places. In both pieces, however, the music quickly progressed into a repetitive beat which detracted from the initial sense of relaxation and left me agitated and wondering when it would finish.

In places the music is interesting and captures some of the essence of wilderness, but these moments are the exception. Generally, the composition is ordinary. I found this a pity because the ten photographs in the accompanying CD-size booklet are well produced, detailed and expressive. ■

Philippa Lohmeyer



Publications for possible review are welcome. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, VIC 3181.

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RIGHT PIG'S BREAKFAST

Bush bikers revel in mud wallow

I had a good laugh after reading an article in the January edition of *Australasian Dirt Bike* magazine titled 'Out of the Wilderness'. The article argued that vehicular access to the Deua wilderness and Bendethera area should not be restricted and that the area is for all to enjoy... (in the same issue was) an article titled 'Quad Squad' which was a review of a four-wheel-type motorbike, and included the following:

Mud is great! You can spray mud all over creation with this thing! HOOEE! If you use four-wheel-drive you can shower really sticky putrid mud from all four wheels at the same time and make a right pig's breakfast of the quad and the surrounding landscape while huge mudguards keep you absolutely spotless. Any bits you miss you can cover by getting a run-up and powering into the mud wallow at warp six.

Tim McDonald
Queanbeyan, NSW

Empire building

Cheers to Alan Beasley (Wildfire, *Wild* no 52) for pointing out how population growth impinges on the environment; also to Andrea Sharman on the water crisis. I left Scotland 30 years ago to escape from a crowded environment and I'm dismayed to see all the symptoms appearing in Australia.

Our natural growth in Australia is no more than replacement value nowadays, so from here on all population increase stems from immigration, mostly of people who believe in the high-children family. Politicians keep encouraging this for all they're worth, as part of their empire-building philosophy. Don't believe a word of what they tell you about 'humanitarian reasons' or 'increased consumerism creating jobs'. Experience over the last 20 years has shown both environment and economy worsening with population growth. It won't prove much help to Third World people to come here and create another Third World.

Aussies and migrants alike poll strongly in favour of stopping immigration and it's time the green lobby got behind this move. Do we want to see the situation as it exists in the USA, where you have to join a lottery in the hope of getting a ticket to certain National Parks?

Marjorie Gray
Alexandra Hills, Qld

More Electrowankers

Like John Ulrichsen and Annie Whybourne, whose letter was published in *Wild* no 52, we too are very concerned about the increasing use of technology in the rucksack sports—for example the use of the global positioning system in navigation. So it was with some

surprise that we recently received a leaflet in the mail from a company called Electrowank Megastores International. As it is highly pertinent to the issue raised by John and Annie, we thought you and your readers might be interested in some of the products it is promoting.

Port-a-Poo Pack. A rucksack of exceptional quality that converts to a comfortable



commode! It has its own fold-out seat (optional fur-covering) for comfort and a special (deodorized) compartment for storage of bodily matters. No need to spend hours searching for that perfect tree to hide behind or digging holes on rock platforms—the Port-a-Poo can be used in the convenience of your own tent!

The Jason Pack. Perfect for the serious armchair bushwalker! A rucksack that converts at the touch of a button to a comfy fireside armchair! Comes complete with head-rest (reclinable for star-gazing) and expandable foot-rest. For the less agile members of the bushwalking community it also comes with the option of four sturdy, all-terrain wheels so that you can stay seated while travelling through the great outdoors!...

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Kate Malfroy and Geoff Bailey
Jamberoo, NSW

The pass laws

I enjoyed Stephen Down's article on walking Tasmania's Southern Ranges (*Wild* no 51) and

appreciated *Wild* taking the trouble to mention the need to pay entry fees for all Tasmanian National Parks. The paragraph on fees (page 42) implies that those entering the Lune River-Cockle Creek end of the Southwest National Park have nowhere in the local area to purchase passes. I would like to point out that Esperance Forest Heritage Centre at Geeston and the Dover Office of the Parks



& Wildlife Service both sell passes during normal 'tourist' hours...

Peter Grant
Parks & Wildlife Service, Tasmania
Hobart, Tas

No need to advertise

This letter is regarding several articles over the last few years about Peter Treseder and his 'amazing achievements'.

I have been walking for 35 years... I learned from a very young age to appreciate the outdoors and not to destroy it for myself or for others now and in the future... I have learned to be self-sufficient and not to destroy the environment... I also learned bush safety: I do not travel alone and am properly equipped to handle all emergencies...

The bush is to be enjoyed by all and not just a few... running through the bush disturbs the animals and birds. It also damages vegetation and places great demands on rescue services in times of emergency. I have served in the armed forces and have also been a member of the State Emergency Service, and I do not appreciate spending many days rescuing lone injured walkers. In most cases they needed help because of their stupidity and inability to recognize their limitations, especially in an emergency.

With reference specifically to Treseder: For someone who has walked a lot and has good navigational skills, as well as bushwalking and survival skills, the only thing that he has

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achieved is a test of fitness that could have been accomplished anywhere. Thank goodness that most reputable bushwalkers...are not interested in this type of activity.

I have also been successful in several pursuits and activities but I do not need to advertise them. My reward is intrinsic and not extrinsic. I also feel good when I see that I have influenced others, by my example, in having a positive and responsible attitude...

I enjoy reading your magazine and I commend you for your magnificent efforts. However, I doubt if many readers are really interested in the exploits and achievements of Peter Treseder and others like him...

Alfred Zommers
Box Hill, Vic

Smug contempt

I noted with interest your review of my book *Ski-Touring in Victoria and NSW in Wild* no 51.

I am sure the reviewer was being sarcastic when he classed himself as being in an 'ignorant minority'. I would hesitate to use such an abusive term; however, the term 'minority' appears to be correct.

This book was written for the cross-country skiing majority. These people, here in Victoria, according to Alpine Resorts Commission figures for the last good season, in 1992, are roughly 100 000 skiers who spend the day at Lake Mountain. The reviewer is clearly not among them. He has clearly also never tried to find his way, without foreknowledge and with the totally inadequate road maps most people have in their cars, to some of the more remote locales I included, such as Mt Arbuckle, which is not even marked on many maps...

As for the maps freely available at the resorts being infinitely superior to what I provided, I have the relevant publications for Falls Creek and Perisher. And what do they show? In both cases, the immediate village environs and the downhill runs. There are excellent 1:25 000 and 1:50 000 maps of the areas I mapped out. Does the average beginner skier know how to read them? Of course not.

Though a skier of long experience, I retain some sympathy for the difficulties of beginner skiers rather than the smug contempt I find embodied here. From the modest but respectable sales there are obviously at least some out there who share both that sympathy and the lack of information that I in good faith endeavoured to remedy.

Raymond Peace
East Malvern, Vic

October revolution

I was surprised to read (*Wild Information*, *Wild* no 52) that just one Australian manufacturer is offering one model of its boots in two widths. Obviously our competitors think they know more about the manufacture of our boots than we do. The statement is, in fact, incorrect. All our boots are available in two widths and have been since October 1993.

Carol Watkin
Bunyip Boot Company
Abbotsford, Vic

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address, for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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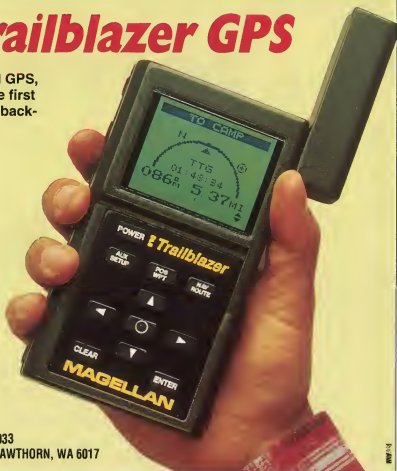
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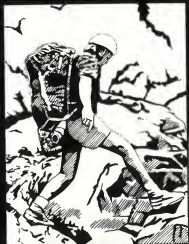
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The makers of Gore-Tex® fabric are proud to introduce a new fabric called WindStopper®. The revolutionary new range of WindStopper fabrics are made by incorporating a 'gossamer' membrane into some of your favourite outdoor fabrics, like fleece and light 'sportswear' fabrics.

The result is a whole new category of clothing that offers warmth and protection with less bulk AND enough breathability to maintain comfort during even the most strenuous activity.

WindStopper fabric stops cold wind from penetrating your clothes. So you can stay warmer outdoors when it's cold and windy without the usual bulky, restrictive

clothing – giving you greater freedom of movement whether you're climbing, skiing, jogging, cycling, golfing or just walking.

WindStopper's extreme breathability means that you can comfortably vary your activity level without having to adjust your clothing or change 'layers'.

The bottom line is greater comfort in the outdoors – all weathers, all activities.

For Service and Information:

You can contact W.L. Gore and

Associates on free-phones:

Australia – 008 226 703,

New Zealand – 0800 107 107.

